# ONLY A LOVE-STORY.

VOL. I.

# ONLY A LOVE-STORY.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"GLENCAIRN," "NOT EASILY JEALOUS,"
"BETWEEN TWO FIRES,"
&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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OF

# THE FIRST VOLUME.

# BOOK I.

## IN THE HAPPY MORNING OF LIFE AND OF MAY.

"The thrushes sang,
And shook my pulses and the elms's new leaves;
At which I turned and held my finger up,
And bade him mark that, howsoe'er the world
Went ill, as he related, certainly
The thrushes still sang in it.

. . . . . .

I was glad that day;
The June was in me, with its multitudes
Of nightingales all singing in the dark,
And rosebuds reddening where the calyx split—
I felt so young, so strong, so sure of God!
So glad, I could not choose be very wise!"

E. B. Browning.

# ONLY A LOVE-STORY.

## CHAPTER I.

"SWEET IS ALL THE LAND ABOUT AND ALL THE FLOWERS THAT BLOW."

IT is early in the evening, and early in "the merry month of May." The season may be Spring by the almanac, but by the sun and sky and flowering trees this day has been pure Summer.

The London street is warm and still; even the much-abused London sky is blue for once, as clear and stainless a blue as Italy ever knows, though of less rich and intense a tint than that which glorifies the heaven of Italy, and seems to veil in radiance its measureless depths.

It is the last half-hour of daylight, and no fleck of cloud floats in the faultless azure from horizon to horizon. But the inhabitants of Clarence Street have no horizon-line; two parallel rows of bricks and mortar compose all their view, and shut out all sights of Spring and Summer save the broad belt of beautiful blue heaven above. The square straight outlines of wall and window all the length of the long street are unbroken by the grace of a single curve; and from the dingy chimney-pots down to the pavements that are dusty white when there is sunshine, and muddy brown when there is rain, not a gleam of brightening colour, nor a leaf of refreshing green catches the eye, save in one or two places, where courageous and constant lovers of flowers have set forth pots of those frail beauties on their window-sills, to droop in the London dust, and die in the London smoke.

There is one more sign of the season

still—the itinerant flower-man, with his barrow, is abroad, carrying a breath of the country with him, looking up at each house as he passes to utter his sing-song shout of "All a-blowin', and a-growin'." He has had some custom already this evening; he transacts a little more business now at No. 21. The invalid lady in the front parlour, lying on her couch by the window, sends out the little maid-of-all-work to strike a bargain for a pot of hyacinths and an early geranium. The landlady in the back parlour is not so extravagant. There are no flowers blooming in her dingy back yard; she "doesn't see what people want with flowers in London—they'll only die!" Still she steps out of her parlour to look and sniff at the white geranium which slip-shod, grimy-faced, and grimier-aproned little Polly (who sees trees and green grass once a year) is carrying with a broad smile of delight into Miss Howard's room.

All the windows of the house are more

or less open; all its various inmates are, in one way or another, enjoying the mild evening air. The elderly bachelor in the third-floor front, under-clerk in a lawyer's office, on hard work and small pay, is looking out of his window across the dusty street to the opposite chimney-pots, and smoking bad tobacco; the young man in the third-floor back has laid down his pen, and is looking out of his window, across the back-yards, where clothes-lines swing and droop, and smoking a tolerably good cigar. The little dressmaker's girl in the second-floor back is carefully watering and tending a pink primula in a pot, one of her rare sallies of extravagance. A light breeze stirs the petals of the flower as it stands on the window-sill; the girl gives a sigh of pleasure and of memory as she lays her face close down to the leaves. She was born in the country, and she will never, even if she lives to be an old woman, which is scarcely a probability, attain to

the condition of the gentleman to whom "a primrose by the river's brim," was a yellow primrose and nothing more.

Although the drawing-room floor is unoccupied and placarded "To let," there are still two other inhabitants of this mixed household. In the second-floor front room are two ladies—one a mere girl, almost a child still; the other past the prime of life, although it could scarcely yet be said that she had "fallen into the sere and yellow leaf." They are aunt and niece. The aunt, Mrs. King, dressed in well-worn black, in which she still somehow looks every inch a lady, is sitting in the one arm-chair of which the room can boast; and *that* is not an easy-chair except in name, with its hard wooden arms and stiff, upright back. The niece, Calla Yorke, is standing by the window, with a letter in her hand, which she is not reading, but folding, unfolding, and playing with.

She is nearly sixteen, just the awkward transition age, when the grace of childhood has past and the grace of womanhood is not yet formed; and even her best friends could not maintain that Calla Yorke is one of those girls who escape the awkwardness of the age and grow gracefully up from child to woman. She is tall enough to give one the impression of having outgrown her strength (a false impression, for she is as strong as a young lioness); her figure is unformed and immature enough to make her height seem ungraceful; she is indifferent and careless about her toilette; her simple and scanty dress, run up, regardless of fashion, by her own busy fingers, does not set her off to the best advantage; her hair is pushed away from her face and carelessly coiled into a net, in a style too *négligée* to be becoming. Still there is the material that makes beauty in her face, fine-featured and clear-complexioned; there is a freedom

about her air and attitude that promises grace some day.

She holds her head high and lightly as she looks up at the summer sky; she is full of restless youth and energy, so that it seems a difficulty to her to keep still; her supple figure sways, as if keeping time to an unsung tune; her slender fingers maltreat the letter they hold, and her foot beats a light tattoo on the floor, not in any impatience or agitation, but simply in an exuberance of vitality and nervous energy that must find its outlet in some form of action. She looks as if she could only be still or statuesque in sleep.

"The Darrells don't know that we have come down, or rather come *up* in the world, I suppose—up from Clarence Terrace first-floor to Clarence Street second-floor! I daresay they imagine us in possession of a complete suite of apartments here," she observes, in a clear full voice, a semitone deeper than most girls' voices,

glancing gaily round the one apartment which serves as bedroom, drawing-room, and dining-room to her aunt and herself.

"We might be worse off," rejoins Mrs. King, placidly.

"That we might, auntie. For my part, first, second, or third floor doesn't make any difference to me. But, I say, auntie, this is what I'm thinking—when Felix Grey calls, as they say he will, there arises the awful question, '*Where* are we to receive him?' If he were only a woman!—but is it the correct thing for us to receive a gentleman up here?" inquired Calla, who had never been abroad in her life, and to whom Continental hotels were consequently unknown ground. "If he would give us fair warning, we might arrange things somehow," she continued; "but he will walk in unexpectedly. Shall we tell him we've got the sweeps in our sitting-room?"

"I think I have a better idea than that,

my pet," said her aunt, smiling. "If the drawing-rooms are still unlet when he calls, I will ask Mrs. Smith, as a favour, to allow us to receive a visitor there."

"Oh, a capital idea!" exclaimed Calla eagerly. "If only they will keep vacant till he comes! Shall I ask Mrs. Smith about it now? I am going down to see Miss Howard. I haven't been in to see her all day."

"Yes; poor Miss Howard! She says you always cheer her up. Go down and talk to her, and try to amuse her a little, dear. But I think you had better let Mrs. Smith alone. Leave her to me."

"All right," said Calla, with a nod and a smile, and made a rapid exit from the room, shutting the door behind her energetically (as she did most things), with an energy that shut her own dress in the door. The dress tore at the gathers, the wearer exclaimed "Oh, bother!" Mrs. King called out "Do be careful, Calla!" and

Calla, without dreaming of returning to mend the torn gathers, ran downstairs like a whirlwind. Not that she was in any hurry; but she habitually ran downstairs at full speed. At the front-parlour door she knocked, and being invited to enter, went in and closed that door with unusual quiet.

The invalid, Miss Howard, had the flowers she had bought arranged on the table at her elbow, and was still enjoying their fragrance. She greeted her young visitor kindly; it was a dull, sad life she lived, poor woman! and Calla's bright presence in her quiet, close room was one of the few things she looked forward to which helped to while away the time. Calla admired the flowers duly, and bestowed on Miss Howard the requisite cheering and comfort by listening with exemplary patience to a long list of the poor lady's latest symptoms and sufferings.

"Now, my dear, tell me what you have

been doing to-day. How is your auntie? —and have you got any news to amuse me with?" inquired Miss Howard, when she had dwelt sufficiently on all her ills.

"Oh, I've been trying to make a hat three seasons old look like new," replied the girl. "And there's no news—there never is any news—except that we have had letters from Mrs. Darrell and Isabel to-day. I've told you all about Mrs. Darrell and Isabel, haven't I?"

"Mrs. Darrell is the widow lady who came from Australia, and married your mother's cousin, and who lives in France with her husband and her daughter by her first marriage. And Isabel Grey is the daughter, the fair girl whose portrait you have in your album, is she not?" said Miss Howard, who, like most people who lead a lonely, colourless, and joyless life, had a tenacious memory for gossip about people who were total strangers to her.

"Yes, that's it. Well," pursued Calla

narratively, "you know she had two children, a son and a daughter; only long before she married Mr. Darrell, Felix had gone back to Australia. He is much older than Isabel, of course; he has been for the last eight years in America and Canada —indeed, he seems to have been all over the world. And now he has come back to his mother: he hasn't seen her, or been in Europe at all all this time! Just fancy! He came from Quebec, and he has been staying at La Basse-Rive some time; and now he has come to London, and he's going to call and see us soon."

"Well, my dear, that is a piece of news! And how old is Mr. Felix Grey? You have never seen him, of course?"

"No, of course not. I never saw his mother until she married Mr. Darrell seven or eight years ago, you know; and then Felix had been away ever so long. I must have been quite a child when he went back to Australia."

"You are not much more than a child still," said Miss Howard kindly, but half compassionately, as suffering middle age is apt to look on youth.

"I am nearly sixteen. A great many girls are married at sixteen."

"Not a great many, I hope, my dear. I think those early marriages are very rash experiments."

"Why rash?"

"Because a girl marrying so young loses all her girlhood, springs at once from childhood to a woman's work and a woman's duties. Besides, at that age it is scarcely possible she can really know her own mind."

"That's what people say so often," responded Calla, "but it always seems to me that one's own mind must be the very easiest thing in all the world to know at any age. Not that *I* want to be married at sixteen; for my part, *I* never can see why people want to get married and bother

about housekeeping at all. *My* plan, if I ever had any money, would be to live single, and have a set of rooms in a large hotel."

"I hope you will never carry out that plan, my dear child," said Miss Howard, with a slightly shocked air. "You will contract a happy union in the course of time, I hope, for your own sake. It is sad for a woman to be alone," she added, with a repressed sigh.

Calla's bright, half-defiant smile faded. She noticed the sigh, and the sad look on the poor pain-worn face, and felt sympathetic, but only looked a little awkward and embarrassed. She was not timid nor reserved, as a rule, but an occasional shyness had often held her back from expressing her feelings, and made her look cold and unsympathetic.

"Still," continued Miss Howard, "it is, of course, far better to be alone than with anyone but the right person."

"But there must be a great many right persons in the world for each of us," remarked Calla.

"How do you mean, my dear?" asked Miss Howard, rather alarmed lest the girl should be about to advocate a plurality of husbands.

"Why, there are so many kinds of tempers and characters that one could get on with very well," replied Calla, philosophically. "I could get on with any man who didn't want to keep me too much in order, no matter what kind of a temper he had. I am not so particular as some girls," she added, with a grandly impartial air. "I should not care a bit whether he was dark or fair. Of course, I should like to have something of a choice; but then it isn't many girls of my sort who have that luck, I'm afraid. What I should like now would be to have three or four men to pick and choose from—or say half-a-dozen, to study them, and see which one had the best-

balanced character, and the nicest temper, and the clearest and finest intellect; and the most money, too, of course," she finished, her eyes being evidently fixed steadily on the matter-of-fact, and totally ignoring the sentimental.

Miss Howard smiled.

"You may well laugh at my talking about 'choice,'" said Calla, joining frankly in what she deemed to be the joke against herself. "But I only said I should *like* it. I know, as I said, that of course I'll have no such luck."

But it was not the vanity at which Miss Howard smiled. She was smiling half sadly at the utter omission of Love from Calla's matrimonial plans.

Of love, properly so-called, Calla indeed had not a thought. Her nature was not ripe for the comprehension of it; it had no place in her dreams. She read of it in novels and poetry, and liked it there; there it seemed to her in its place. But in her

crude and undeveloped ideal of life, love had at this time no part at all.

She was as yet rather thoughtful than sentimental, of a mind more receptive and fuller of keen perceptions than those persons who only noticed her lively, careless manner, and did not observe the expression of her dark hazel eyes, would have given her credit for. She had lived through a fair share of experience in her sixteen years—first, the pleasant experience of a pretty country home, happy in spite of many pecuniary troubles, of which Calla was then too young to be conscious; next, the painful experiences of the breaking-up of that home, of privations, of debt, of difficulty; then of death, and of a parting following that, which seemed scarcely less than another death.

The death was that of her mother; the parting was with her father, who, three months after his wife's death, went off to America to try his fortunes there, leaving

little Calla, then about eleven years old, in the care of her two aunts, her mother's sisters. With her maiden aunt Alice in the country, and her widowed aunt Sarah in London, the girl lived alternately until her aunt Alice, marrying late in life, went off to live in the north of Scotland, when Calla fell entirely into Sarah King's charge. She had no living relative on her father's side, and only one other on her mother's, the Mr. Darrell, of whom mention has already been made. He was the first cousin of the deceased Mrs. Yorke, and he and his wife, and his step-daughter, although they lived in France, and their visits to London were few and far between, were the nearest and dearest friends Calla possessed, and those rare visits of theirs were seasons marked with a white stone to her.

Thus, although he was no blood-relation of theirs, both Mrs. King and Calla looked forward, with almost as much pleasure as

though he had been of their own kindred, to seeing Mrs. Darrell's son, Felix Grey. Besides their natural wish to make the acquaintance of any member of that family, a visitor was an event to Calla and her aunt. They had few friends and little money, and consequently went into no society.

Mrs. King wrote pretty novelettes with unexceptional morals, and short stories for children's magazines, which she generally got published and paid for, and these payments, small as they were, went far towards being the main support of herself and her niece, for Mrs. King's private means were represented by a very low figure; they were barely sufficient to supply the pair with bread, and the contributions of Calla's father to the funds were irregular, and came generally as surprises more or less pleasant, according to the figures on the cheque.

The life which Calla Yorke led was thus

a quiet and eventless one, but she never found it dreary, never sighed at its dulness, nor tired of its monotony. In her exuberant health and joyous youth mere life was a pleasure to her. She revelled in the Summer sun and rejoiced in the clear Winter frosts; she lived so intensely in the present, that the slightest passing incident caught her fancy and occupied her imagination, and of course she was deeply interested in the prospective visit of Felix Grey.

Mrs. Smith was duly "spoken to" about the vacant drawing-room, and humbly petitioned to allow Mrs. King to receive visitors there. In a gracious mood Mrs. Smith consented, and even bestowed the additional favour of an "ornament for the fire-stove," and a few books upon the table to make it look more home-like. She disclaimed thanks, saying she liked to do things for the credit of the house.

Unluckily for the credit of the house,

according to Mrs. Smith's ideas, Mrs. Smith was not to the fore when Mr. Grey appeared upon the scene, and Polly, unaware or forgetful of the arrangement that had been made, marshalled him past the door of the state apartment that had been prepared to receive him, up to the second floor. From the second-floor landing, a window led out on to what Calla called "her balcony," but which other members of the household more simply, if less euphoniously, styled "the leads." As a substitute for a balcony, it possessed the recommendation of being the nearest approach to that luxury which the house afforded, save in the sacred "drawing-rooms." More than this could scarcely be said for it, except by Calla, who maintained that she had a "view" from it. She could see three trees and an almost unlimited expanse of back-yards.

On this favourite spot Calla was wont to sit and read in Summer; and there she

was sitting, or rather lounging, curled up on the dusty leads—her elbow on the low parapet which ran around them, a great folio Shakespeare, very much the worse for wear, on her lap, the sharp sunlight throwing into pitiless prominence the worn places and dusty streaks on her old brown frock, and the untidy, rebellious locks of hair that had broken free from the restraints of a few straggling hair-pins—when Mr. Grey, escorted by Polly, ascended the stairs.

"Please, Miss Calla, here's a gentleman!"

Polly jerked these words abruptly at Calla, and drew back, evidently deeming her duty done. Calla dropped her book into the dust, and looked too startled and dismayed to rise.

"Who is it?" she asked; and as she put the question, the visitor whose advent had been so unceremoniously announced, stood at the window and looked down on her, as she stared open-eyed at him.

Then he stooped his head—he had to bend it somewhat low to get through the open window—and stepped out on the leads to her, and said,

"Miss Calla, must I introduce myself?"

She jumped up, blushing vividly, and letting her book lie where it had fallen.

"You can't be anybody else but Felix—Mr. Grey?" she said, correcting her first familiarity. She looked at him half gladly, half disappointedly, glad to see and to know the traveller who had travelled so far, the wanderer who had returned home at last, yet disappointed to find him so far from "all that fancy had painted him." She had imagined him quite as a hero of romance, Apollo-featured and Herculean-limbed. And lo! here was a rather plain and decidedly unpicturesque young man in a light coat, with a figure as far from resembling the Dying Gladiator as his features were from the Apollo Belvidere.

However, he had a very pleasant smile,

and he shook hands with her as if they had been friends a dozen years.

"You *are* yourself, I suppose, and not anybody else? We are not both making a mistake, are we?" she said, merrily, as she cast a second glance of inspection and criticism upon his face.

"I am myself, I believe. I have always been under the impression, at least, that I was the real and genuine Felix Grey. I never heard anyone else lay claim to that distinction. It's evident you don't think I resemble my family much?"

He smiled as if he read her thoughts, and she reddened guiltily, conscious that those thoughts were, how very much better-looking his family were than he; but as he smiled, the resemblance struck her suddenly, and she recognised his sister's expression, his mother's eyes.

"Now I am much more trustful than you," he continued. "I take it for granted

at once and for all that you are Miss Calla Yorke."

"Ah! you heard Polly call me," said Calla, practically. "And now you must not stay out here; it is not where we receive visitors generally."

"Is not it? Why not?" he responded, laughingly. "It's open and airy. And it's your place for reading, I see," he added, stooping to pick up the fallen Shakespeare.

"Yes, I like it; I hate sitting in rooms in Summer."

"What a capital traveller you would make!"

"Come, you must travel down to the drawing-room now," she said briskly. "And give me my book. If you hadn't startled me, I shouldn't have dropped poor *Timon of Athens* into the dust."

"*Timon of Athens!* What a choice for *you!*" he observed, looking with a half-

surprised, half-amused glance at her young and almost childish face.

"Why for *me?* I'm very fond of it. That's the way!" she added in her usual bright, decisive manner, as she looked alternately up and down the stairs. "Down to the drawing-room; the front door. I'll fetch auntie."

The drawing-room did not look very home-like; it had a cold and uninhabited appearance, in spite of the beautiful pink-and-silver ornament for the stove, and Mrs. Smith's contributions of a Bible, a dictionary, and a keepsake for 1830 towards the furniture of the centre table.

Mr. Grey had time to glance into each volume of this selection of literature, and to discover that there was no ink in the inkstand, and that the clock on the mantelpiece did not go, before Calla returned with Mrs. King, the latter in her best black dress, Calla with her wandering locks of hair put up, and sundry finishing touches

added to her attire, certainly not before they were needed, but wasted on Felix Grey, who had no eyes for feminine toilette.

He responded warmly to Mrs. King's cordial welcome; and the ice of a first meeting, which usually thaws slowly to its dissolution, in this instance broke up at once. From the moment Felix Grey spoke and smiled, he was no longer a stranger, but a friend. Calla's momentary disappointment in his appearance had quickly passed; and she and her aunt alike regarded him with approving eyes.

It certainly was not any personal beauty in him that attracted them. His best friends could not, by any stretch of imagination, have called him handsome. His face was too long and too thin; his figure also too spare and angular for his height; his mouth was partly hidden by a heavy moustache, of the same light reddish brown as his hair, which did not seem to

have a wave or a curl in it. There was nothing at all remarkable about the darker brown eyes except their thoughtful kindliness of expression, though they were undeniably his best feature. There was nothing beautiful or regular about the whole face; and yet when it smiled it was attractive—wonderfully so, considering how little of conventional attractions it could boast.

One of the first things noticeable about him was an indescribable "thoroughbred" air. It was certainly not in his manner or language, which were frank and easy, and in no way *distingué;* yet it was somehow perceptible in his every look and word. If you had seen Felix Grey in fustian rags, with his long thin fingers, dark and coarse with manual work, after a very few moments the idea would surely have occurred to you, "This man must have been born a gentleman!" His voice was clear and low, his accent a trifle

strange to London ears, but very gentle and deliberate. Yet it was not to his low voice or long shapely hands that you could attribute his air of gentle birth and breeding; it clung about him undefinably, but unmistakably.

"Are you glad to get back to England?" asked Calla, in her usual full and animated tones.

"Yes; I feel that I've come *home*. That's odd enough, for I only came to England when I was eleven, and left it when I was fourteen. Yet when I touched English ground I threw up my cap and said, 'Here I am in my native land again!'—the native land I'd only known for three years of boyhood," he added, smiling.

"But the land of your parents, the land you must have been brought up to consider your own!" said Mrs. King.

"Yes, that's just it. All my life England has been 'Home' in my mind. No colonist ever talks of 'going over to Eng-

land.' It's always 'going home.' It is quite a surprise to me that my mother chooses to live in France."

"I suppose it is her choice as well as Mr. Darrell's?"

"Quite as much. She likes it. By-the-by, I hope we are to have the pleasure of seeing you at La Basse-Rive this Summer?"

"Mrs. Darrell has very kindly invited us, but I fear we shall not be able to manage the visit this season."

"No, no such luck, I'm afraid," said Calla, regretfully.

"You would like to come?" he inquired.

"Yes," emphatically.

"Well, then, of course you must come," confidently.

"It would be a new and unrecognisable world if we all did as we liked, wouldn't it?" observed Mrs. King. "I do not like working as hard as I do, but I have to do it."

"And I help auntie as much as I can. I copy for her, and help to correct the proofs," said Calla.

"It is literature that takes up your time? That's half the errand I've come to London upon," he rejoined. "You must know that amongst the manifold posts I have filled in my life, I have been a little of everything——"

> "'Soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor,
> 'Pothecary, ploughboy, thief!'"

quoted Miss Calla, saucily putting in *her* word.

"Very nearly all that," he assented. "My enemies would tell you perhaps even a little of the last, I daresay. But amongst these various professions I edited a paper once, and naturally took to scribbling, so I'm come publisher-hunting. I've got some introductions. I suppose *you* have plenty of literary friends?"

"Very few. You see we are living very

quietly, in rooms not suitable for mixing in society," began Mrs. King.

"No, that I don't see. I consider this a first-rate reception-room," he said, glancing around it.

"It is—the fact is," replied Mrs. King, hesitating, and casting an involuntarily inquiring look towards Calla. It was odd that the aunt, cultivated, strong, and thoughtful woman as she was, often appealed to and accepted her young niece's decision.

"This is not our room. We only borrow it to receive 'distinguished visitors' in. We are up on the floor above this, and these rooms are to let," said Calla, quite frankly and confidingly, without any blush or discomfiture.

"To let, are they, these rooms? Back and front room, I suppose?" he rejoined, somewhat eagerly; adding, "Ah! but then if you are in the habit of using this as your visitors' room, of course it would be incon-

venient to you if they were occupied?"

"Not at all. They are sure to be occupied soon. It is the merest chance that they happen to be empty, and we happen to have borrowed this room to-day."

"And distinguished visitors don't often trouble us," laughed Calla. "We receive about six female friends; but wolves don't prowl around this fold much."

"Am I a wolf, then?" asked Mr. Grey, looking half puzzled, half amused.

"At school my dear old governess used to give me to understand that all men were wolves. I have laid that lesson to heart, you see, whatever else I forgot. I was only one quarter at school," added Calla, which last piece of information was not only irrelevant, but entirely unnecessary, inasmuch as it was impossible to be ten minutes in Calla Yorke's company without perceiving that she was no school-bred girl. No girl bred at school, no girl brought up amongst a mass of other girls,

had ever that air of freedom and openness that was not audacious, because it was so simple, that look and manner of innocence that yet just escaped ignorance and *gaucherie* because it was so childlike.

"If these rooms are to be let, would a wolf taking them be deemed to endanger the safety of the fold?" inquired Mr. Grey.

"Not at all; we have two tame wolves upstairs."

"Then might I take these rooms?" he asked, sincerely and anxiously inquiring, as if for an absolute necessary permission from an autocrat.

"My dear Mr. Grey, that would be your affair and the landlady's! We should, of course, be very glad to have you for a neighbour, if these apartments really suited you," replied Mrs. King, smiling very pleasantly.

"It would be very nice for you to be here; then we should know everybody in the house," said Calla gladly.

"Who are they that live in the house?"

"Up at the top, Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Treves; warranted harmless wolves both. On the second floor three lambs—myself and auntie in the front, and Miss Roberts, a dressmaker, in the back. In the parlour an invalid lady, Miss Howard," replied Calla, going straight through the list, as if she had been reading an inventory aloud. "The inhabitants of the drawing-rooms are considered the aristocrats of the house. The last set—they went last week—were very patrician and very disagreeable. You would be a decided improvement on them."

"Thank you," he replied. "Let us hope you will continue in the same mind on our further acquaintance."

"He'll take the rooms! I'm sure he will!" Calla exclaimed, when Felix Grey had departed, dancing joyfully, as she spoke, round the apartment—their own legitimate apartment, to which they had returned. "He is nice, auntie, isn't he?

Not a beauty, though. Not so good-looking as Mrs. Darrell's son ought to be, is he? It will be nice to have Isabel's brother in the house with us, won't it? He's much darker than Isabel, isn't he?"

"Yes, to all the string of questions. I think I shall like him, Calla. It's evident *you* do already."

"How could I help liking Mrs. Darrell's son? and when he is going to take the drawing-room floor, too!" exclaimed Calla, as if this last were indeed a rare and crowning attraction. "Now I am going to announce the joyful news to Miss Howard. *Any* news is good news in this establishment, because there so seldom is any! And every bit of news there is I am always the first to purvey! I think the inmates ought to subscribe to me as a kind of local gazette!" she added gaily, as she flashed out of the room at her usual express speed.

Mrs. King smiled affectionately after the

girl, and thought to herself that they might better subscribe to her as the brightest bit of sunshine in the house.

## CHAPTER II.

"A ROSE WITH ALL ITS SWEETEST LEAVES YET FOLDED."

FELIX GREY did fulfil Calla's anticipation, and crown and complete his own attraction for her, by taking "the drawing-room floor." The very day after his first visit he moved in, bag and baggage, the baggage, save by one portmanteau, being scantily represented, but the name of the bags being legion.

The house was certainly the pleasanter for his presence. He did not remain three days a stranger to anyone in it; he made acquaintance with everybody by the simple means of greeting in a friendly "hail-fellow-well-met" way every member of the

establishment he encountered on the stairs. He made Mrs. King take him down to the parlour and introduce him to the invalid lady, Miss Howard, on one of the latter's "best days," and entertained her for an hour with accounts of other lands and descriptions of his travels.

He picked up a superficial kind of intimacy with Mr. Treves, and found him in daily, or rather nightly, cigars. Mrs. Smith permitted smoking in her lodgers' rooms, although it was forbidden on the stairs; but Mr. Grey soon became a privileged person, who was tacitly licensed to light or to retain alight his cigar without the prescribed limits.

He seemed to entertain a serious objection to partaking of any meal, save breakfast, alone, to judge by the frequency of his invitations to Mrs. King and Calla, to come down to tea and muffins, or dinner, if he dined at home, which, however, was but seldom. Many were the little notes of invita-

tion that Polly, holding carefully in her apron to preserve them from coming into blackening contact with her finger and thumb, conveyed from the first up to the second floor. Mrs. King scrupled at accepting these hospitalities at first; but it was very difficult to refuse anything to Felix Grey.

"I never recognised the inconvenience of being a bachelor before!" he said. "Won't you try to imagine that I've got a wife somewhere over the water? If you'd suppose that, it would make it all square, wouldn't it? But come, Mrs. King, that's not necessary; why, we are relations, you know; we are almost cousins according to my code. Don't put me to the pain of having to rush out and get married to somebody by special license before you'll come to tea!"

So to partake of the harmless dissipation of tea and muffins, they frequently went down into the wolf's den, as Calla now christened the drawing-room; and even

these mild festivities formed a pleasing variation in the monotony of daily life. A little society and conversation beyond that of her landlady and fellow-lodgers, a little breath of new life from other worlds, was as pleasant to Mrs. King as to her niece, who from the first was eager to accept the tea-and-toast invitations. Perhaps Calla's wishes might have carried the day even if there had been an opposition, instead of union, of inclinations in the case. For Calla was her aunt's pet weakness, and must have all the innocent amusements that could be given to her.

Mrs. King's method in bringing up Calla had been a conflict between principle and impulse, between "a little hoard of maxims," as to the education of the young, and a warm and almost maternal affection for this child who was all the responsibility and all the sunshine of her life, and whose spirits she could not bear to check. Consequently Calla could not be said to have

been brought up on any system at all; she grew up naturally as a flower, unpruned and untrained, all wild spirits and warm heart and glowing health. Mrs. King's main idea was that girls ought not to be spoilt by habits of self-consciousness and self-study, and on this point Calla proved an eminently satisfactory charge, though her disregard of her own personality was less owing to modesty than to thoughtlessness.

> "The strange thing was that, beauteous, she was wholly
> Unconscious, albeit turned of quick *sixteen*;
> That she was fair, or dark, or short, or tall,
> She never thought about herself at all."

She took Felix Grey into her full confidence and fraternal friendship immediately, and declared to her aunt her liking for him with a naïveté that utterly ignored the fact that he was a young man, and she a girl—a fact which he also appeared to ignore almost as completely as she.

He had plenty of introductions in London, but there were only a few of which he chose to avail himself. He picked up several male friends, old and new, most of whom came and called upon him in Clarence Street. Two of them speculated as they walked away together.

"Why doesn't he put up at an hotel? Seems tolerably flush—fellows fresh from America always are, or ought to be. Wonder why he stops in that dingy house with the grubby little 'Marchioness?'"

Probably, if they had seen one of his little tea-parties of three, they would have wondered less; but in that case they would have entirely misattributed the attraction the house had for him. He liked the society of his fellow-creatures, although for "society" properly so-called he cared not much, nor had hitherto been much accustomed to it. He hated formality; he liked freedom, he liked humanity, and there was plenty of humanity in the "dingy

house" in Clarence Street, from the little "Marchioness," who always looked hungry, and generally dirty, and yet somehow almost invariably cheerful, and the poor faded lady who had known better days, and could not forget the fact, although she had come down in the world to one shabby front parlour, up to the mild old gentleman who came and went quietly to and from his office, and led a negative sort of life, and was no trouble to anyone; and down again to Calla, with her bright free youth, glad and gay as a bird, singing bird-like from pure lightness of heart, utterly careless of herself, and unconscious that she was as a glint of living sunlight sparkling about the dingy house. Felix liked studies of life and character; his habits were frugal; Mrs. Smith, for a wonder, could cook, and cook well, when she chose, and altogether his present abode suited his tastes well, more especially on account of its contrast with the staid and

stately private hotel where he had been staying before. He had not felt himself anything more than "Number 38" there, and he preferred being a man to being a number. He liked Calla and Mrs. King, too; but as to flirtation or romance, he never troubled his head or heart at all about anything of the sort. The life he had led was more conducive to forming friendships than loves. Falling in love was not his "line of business" at all; and besides, Calla was a child—a child in nature even more than in years—a child to whom the great world was unknown, and "society" merely a name.

"Well, Miss Calla, what were you doing in the house all this fine afternoon?" Felix inquired, as they finished their tea one day.

"Copying auntie's last chapter for her, while she was making a new frock for me. Whenever either of us gets tired, we take a turn at each other's occupation."

"To the relief and advantage of both parties. A sort of mutual liability company Calla and I form, you see."

"And a mutual blessing, I guess. I wonder how you would get on without each other?" he observed.

"We are in no great hurry to try the experiment—are we, Calla?"

"No, indeed. Auntie and I are never going to do without each other. Some day, when our ship comes home, and when she publishes a large illustrated book, I shall do the illustrations."

"Do you draw, then?"

"Whenever I have time and opportunity, I spoil paint and paper. But I try to do everything. I try to sing; I try to write; I try to paint, and I can't do any of them well."

"One would scarcely expect a finished artist, author, or musician at your age," he observed smiling. "But which would you rather be?"

"An author," she responded promptly, "but auntie thinks I have more talent for drawing, and papa used to wish me to draw. I think when he comes back he will be pleased to find I have worked at my sketches."

"And what do you draw?"

"Calla's designs are on an ambitious scale," observed Mrs. King. "She was trying the great scene between Othello and Iago the other day, and her latest attempt is Cleopatra and her women drawing Antony up wounded into the monument."

"But I tore Othello and Iago up," Calla interposed. "I could not make Othello's *face* satisfactory; he looked just like one of those niggers with bones! and I can't manage the *monument* at all in Antony and Cleopatra, so next time I'm going to try the scene where the clown brings the asp and Iras falls down dead."

Felix could not repress a smile, not at

her failures, but at her choice of subjects. They were, however, the natural choice, in perfect keeping with that phase of her life. The imagination develops long before the heart, and in early youth the floating straws of fancy show the current of the temperament before yet a single cargo of feeling is launched and trusted to the tide.

"You must show me some of your sketches," he said.

"They're not worth showing to anybody," she replied very decisively. "If I don't get on better in my designs soon, I shall drop drawing and *really* try to write."

"But you must not think," he said, "that because you don't *yet* succeed in conveying your ideas either by pen or pencil that you are bound to be a failure. Mrs. King can tell you, I am sure, that it is not often that talent develops itself so early."

"Early! I am sixteen," she protested. "At what age did *your* talent begin to

develop itself?" she added with real curiosity.

"My light was hidden under a bushel until I was considerably past sixteen," he acknowledged smiling. "I suppose I had the scribbling instincts always; but the fit seized me suddenly at last, and though pens and paper were not too plentiful where I was then, I plunged down into the depths so deep, I might have double-papered the walls of my tent with my own compositions."

"And what sort of things do you write?"

"Well, I'll show you, if you would care to look over one of my MSS.?"

"Yes; *do* show me!" she said eagerly.

Felix opened a drawer, and rummaging among a confusion of papers, presently pulled out a bundle and handed it to Calla.

"It's all true, if that will make it any the more interesting," he observed.

"Am I to be shut out of your confidence? Can't you spare one for me to look at too?" asked Mrs. King.

Felix hesitated.

"Well, you see, Mrs. King," he said, with a sort of boyish embarrassment, "I am—a—kind of afraid of *you!*"

"But when you are going to challenge public criticism, why not challenge private opinion?"

"Because a private opinion alarms me much more. I'm accustomed to being pitched into in print; my seven years in the United States inured me to that. I have figured as a 'black-minded, prowling vagabond' before now."

"I would promise not to use any language *quite* so strong," Mrs. King said smiling, "however unfavourable my opinions were."

While they chatted, Calla had absorbed herself in Felix Grey's manuscript. She had plunged into the perusal heart and

soul, as she did everything. There she sat, by the window, her elbow on the table, her head on her hand. She had let her hair free from its usual net that day, and only tied it back from her brow with a pink ribbon which, being bright and new, made her old, washed-out pink muslin dress look more faded still. But there was nothing faded or washed-out in the face that blossomed out of the faded dress. Pale, but with a clear and healthy whiteness, with brilliant, earnest eyes, ripe cherry lips, and smooth, fair cheeks that contrived somehow to bloom without colour, there clung a halo of freshness, and brightness, and youth about her like the morning dew upon the half-open rose. The mild May evening sun streamed in and bathed the girlish figure in its light, gilding and reddening to the tint of warm Autumn leaves the ends of the loose tresses that waved over her shoulders, leaving the thicker masses of hair still dark as night.

Felix Grey looked at her approvingly, and, not content with only looking, observed *sotto voce* to Mrs. King, "That *furnishes* the room—lightens it up, doesn't it?" Of which frank compliment Mrs. King discreetly only took notice by a kind smile, and Calla, absorbed in her reading, no notice at all. Leaving her companions to talk or be silent, as they chose, she read steadily on to the end.

"Well, Miss Calla?" inquired the author, as she shut it up.

"What a nice clear hand you write!" was Calla's first remark, uttered with sincere approbation.

Felix fairly burst out laughing.

"I shall feel very much crushed if you have no other criticism to offer," he said, half amused, half curious to know what she did think of it.

Calla disregarded the challenge. In her heart she was delighted with the sketch—for "story" it could hardly be called—and

thought the descriptions simply splendid; there was a vigour and originality and glow of colour about the whole style which took her quite by surprise, and threw the prettiness and gentle morality of Mrs. King's magazine stories—which supplied the staff of life to the aunt and niece, and which Calla was accustomed to copy proudly and sincerely admire—quite into shade. She looked at Felix Grey with a new interest in her eyes—she had not thought it was "in him;" but she always felt shy and awkward at praising people's work to their faces, particularly when specially appealed to. She calmly ignored the invitation to compliment or criticise, and only said—

"Is it really all true?"

"Nearly all. It's coloured up a bit. I put in the gray wolf, for instance, to heighten the picture."

"And was it really you that it happened to?"

"No, it was a friend of mine. But say,

Miss Calla, did it interest you? Did it catch your attention?"

"Yes," she answered emphatically.

"Let me look at it," said Mrs. King, as Calla lingered over the MS., and turned back a leaf or two.

"It's tòo bad of me to afflict my guests in this way," said Felix apologetically; "but I haven't caught a single victim since I landed in England, and I feel that I can't resist inflicting the ordeal on the first helpless ones that fall into my power. I've left a bundle with a publisher; but I don't count *him* as a victim, because ten to one he won't read them. Here, by-the-by," he added, taking out of the cupboard a flask of Chartreuse and a plate of biscuits, "you must have something to restore you after the trial."

"Like the sugar-plum they used to give me after I'd been to the dentist's," suggested Calla.

"Calla, my dear child," remonstrated Mrs. King.

"That isn't a complimentary simile," said Felix, with pretended gravity; but Calla caught the smile in his eyes, and laughed her gay, girlish laugh, which was a refreshing thing to hear, it was so hearty.

"I didn't mean it to be complimentary; but then I didn't mean it to be rude either," she said, in her simple way. "Now, auntie, *you* take it and read it," and she pushed the story over to her aunt.

The elder lady read the manuscript, and did not keep her opinion to herself as the girl had done. She expressed herself "quite charmed," and uttered a gentle but apposite criticism or two which added weight to her approbation. Yet possibly the author may have appreciated Calla's silence more. As they sat discussing literature, Chartreuse, and orange biscuits,

a descending step—masculine—was audible on the staircase outside the door.

"There's Treves. I'd like just to ask him in. May I?" asked Felix, who always, when Mrs. King and Calla were his guests, treated them as the proprietresses of himself and all his belongings. With their sanction, accordingly, he opened the door, and hailed their fellow-lodger with an invitation which he was by no means loth to accept.

Mr. Treves was a young man with sleek, blond hair and a baby moustache, a plump figure, and a good-looking, round, fresh-coloured face, only rather too cherubic and childlike for masculine beauty, who considered himself connected with Art, on the strength of the fact that he had occasionally turned an honest penny, and occupied his evenings after-office hours by doing illustrations on a cheap weekly paper, whose sub-editor held him in his good graces. He also cultivated a musical

talent; and his next door neighbour was often, just at the hour of retiring to rest, afflicted by a doleful serenade on the concertina, which convenient and portable instrument Mr. Treves deemed eminently suitable for an accompaniment to his own singing of "Dormez, dormez, ma belle," and "Kathleen Mavourneen," that much-in-demand young lady, who is always being summoned to wake from her slumbers at such untimely hours. Treves was not a bad young fellow, and he pleased Calla by always treating her as a grown-up young lady.

"How would it be to send a glass of this down to Miss Howard?" suggested Felix, while Treves, with the air of a connoisseur, held his liqueur glass of Chartreuse up to the light.

"Oh! she would be so pleased, I'm sure. Shall I take it to her?" responded Calla, catching gladly at the idea.

"Well, since you're so kind as to offer,

Miss Calla, I would trouble you to carry it down. Our poor little friend Polly always looks half-starved; and I'm afraid if we employed her, Miss Howard might get it diluted."

So Calla tripped downstairs with a small tray, containing—visibly, a glass of Chartreuse and a plate of biscuits, and invisibly, Mr. Grey's compliments and respects. Miss Howard was pleased, kept Calla with her while she sipped and tasted, and related to her with a sigh how "in her poor papa's life-time, they had choice liqueurs every day regularly, in antique Venetian glasses." When Calla's flying feet bore her upstairs to the drawing-room again—for now, unhampered by fears of spilling her charge, she flew, as usual—she carried with her two letters, having encountered the postman at the door.

One letter bore a French postmark, and was addressed to Felix Grey, the other was from America, and was from Calla's father,

though addressed to her aunt, his sister-in-law, for he wrote alternately to one and the other.

"From papa!" cried Calla, breathlessly, as she thrust it into Mrs. King's hand. "Read it quick, auntie."

"You will excuse my opening it," observed Mrs. King, and having received everybody's instant sanction, hesitated still. She had learnt the lesson that years and experience so invariably teach—of timidity in opening letters from far off. Ill news are so sure to reach us; good tidings we are so often left to guess. But Calla knew no fears nor misgivings, and was only impatient and glad. Her instinct was the truest; for not only was the letter a cheerful one, setting forth the writer's improving prospects—(he said he was going to make his fortune, only he had said the same for five years past)—but it enclosed a cheque for two hundred dollars on an Anglo-American bank. Mrs. King

smiled as her eyes fell upon it; Calla's face, as she read the letter eagerly over her aunt's shoulder, became fairly illuminated with delight and interest.

"'Pon my word, Miss Yorke, I'd be very glad if I thought anyone I ever wrote to would receive my letters with such joy," observed Treves, a little sentimentally.

"I daresay plenty would, if you'd send such nice enclosures," replied Calla, carelessly, without looking up from the page.

"Don't imply that you value the enclosure more than the letter, Calla, dear," Mrs. King observed, half reproachfully.

The girl coloured so vividly, and her bright face clouded so suddenly at this slight reproof, that Felix, looking at her, neglected to attend to his own correspondence.

"Well, it's all good news, I hope, Mrs. King?" he said presently; and being assured that it was, proceeded to quote from his own letter. "My mother and Isabel

desire their love to you, and trust you will both be able to pay them a visit very soon. Your rooms will be ready next week; my mother will write to you; and, as I shall soon be going over, I can escort you. I do hope that you will be able to come!"

"I think perhaps we may," replied Mrs. King slowly but hopefully, hastily running over a mental calculation as to how far two hundred dollars would go, and how many "little bills" there were to be paid. "You would like it, Calla?"

"More than anything in the world!"

"You are a fortunate young lady to be so easily contented," observed Mr. Treves.

"Easily contented! To go over to France, to go abroad for the first time in my life, to stay with Mrs. Darrell and Isabel, to see a bit of new, strange life—is that to be *easily* contented. Why, *what* could you want more?" demanded Calla, emphatically.

"I might aspire to some things even

more, I'm afraid," he responded, with a Byronic smile, which sat rather incongruously on his blond, plump, flaxen-moustached face.

It was soon a settled thing that Mrs. King and Calla were to pay their long-talked-of visit to Mr. and Mrs. Darrell the following week, making the not very formidable journey under the escort of Felix Grey.

On the evening before their departure, Felix invited his "friends and fellow-lodgers" to partake of a little supper in his room.

So old Mr. Fletcher, persuaded down from his third-floor front, made his appearance in Mr. Grey's room for the first time; and Mr. Treves, with a rose in his buttonhole, descended the stairs punctually at the hour he was invited; and Mrs. King and Calla came later, not from any intent to be fashionable, but only because, as the hour struck, they were busy finishing a

flounce on a travelling-dress for the morrow, which they sat close together "eating up" between them. And Miss Howard managed to make her way upstairs, leaning on the landlady's arm, and was wrapped in a shawl, and placed in the easiest arm-chair.

And then, as supper was being laid, and Polly, with a clean face, in a new apron and cap, and a high state of excitement, brought in the first pile of plates, Felix Grey looked round the room and inquired,

"Where's Miss Roberts? At home?"

"Yes; she's upstairs at her sewing, as usual."

Felix glanced from Mrs. Smith to Polly, rather hesitatingly, as if debating in his choice of a messenger. Calla came to his side, and smiled comprehendingly and approvingly.

"*I*'ll run up," she said, nodding.

"Miss Calla, you're a brick!" said Felix, with honest pleasure. "I'd go myself,

only I'm afraid of treading on the proprieties. Ask her if she can spare time just to come down, and have a glass of wine with us, just to drink us a pleasant journey to-morrow. I don't like any of the household to be absent to-night."

Miss Howard glanced at Mrs. King; Mrs. King smiled, but not at all satirically nor disapprovingly. Felix either intercepted the glance, or knew it instinctively.

"You ladies don't mind my gathering all the household together just to-night?" he said, in his frank, respectful way—the "winning way," that had never failed to please a woman yet.

"Oh, no, not at all, Mr. Grey; it would ill become us who are enjoying your hospitality to seek to limit it," said Miss Howard, kindly, but showing that she rather admired her own generosity in not desiring to shut the poor little dressmaker out of the enjoyment. For the laws of caste were not much relaxed in this mixed

establishment, and the parlour had very little to do with the second-floor back. It was very much of a world in miniature after all.

In a few minutes Calla returned with Fanny Roberts, who had pleaded in vain "not fit to appear in company."

"Dress! what does dress matter? Just look at *my* dress!" Calla had said; and truly as far as make and material went, Calla's attire had only very slightly the advantage.

The pale, little dressmaker blushed, and tried not to look uncomfortable as she took her seat at the table; it was the first time she had been admitted as a guest into the sacred precincts of the drawing-rooms; but she soon became at ease. She did drop her h's certainly; but she was a good, honest, modest little girl; there was nothing coarse or vulgar about her, although she caused Miss Howard much distress of mind by expressing her choice of a "slice

of 'am," and admitting that she had "'ad an 'eadache that day."

Mr. Treves politely divided his attentions between her and Calla. The landlady and Miss Howard made mutual confidences about their respective ailments, until it appeared a wonder that under such sufferings they could live at all.

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin;" and around the same supper-table, partaking of the same pigeon-pie and drinking the same sherry, the whole miniature world of No. 21, Clarence Street fraternised. The host waxed hilarious under the influence of this success, and leant his elbow on the table and related an anecdote about a bear; and Calla and Miss Roberts, the natural affinity between girls asserting itself in spite of differences of degree, exchanged sympathetic glances of interest as the story reached its most thrilling point.

Anecdote is an easy and convenient

ground for mixed parties to meet upon; a subject of discussion congenial to them all would have been decidedly difficult to select; but on the field of anecdote one and all, narrator and listeners, found themselves at home. Felix's bear story having led the way, Mrs. King followed with an adventure among brigands in Italy, which suggested to the landlady the history of a remarkable burglary, and to Mr. Fletcher a curious case in which his firm had been engaged some forty years ago. Even Fanny Roberts contributed her mite in the shape of an autobiographical account of her escape from a railway accident.

The field of anecdote had probably not been half exhausted when they moved on to the orthodox "fresh woods and pastures new" of toasts and song.

Mr. Treves begged to propose the health of their host, and some of the guests added a sentiment to the toast, Mrs. Smith observing,

"Never was there a gentleman in these here drawing-rooms as made himself more pop'lar; and all I say is, may we see him back again!"

"Hear! hear!" exclaimed Treves, while Mrs. Smith finished her glass of sherry, and looked as if she were about to drop a tear into it, in her regret at Mr. Grey's impending departure.

Then Felix called for a song, and old Mr. Fletcher said, with a little sigh, that he had been considered to take a very good part in glee-singing once, but his singing days were over. It appeared that most of the other guests' singing days were over too, with the exceptions of Calla, who never properly practised or cultivated her voice, and of Fanny Roberts, who had "no voice" to cultivate. But Mr. Treves, on being asked to favour them, hastened, nothing loth, to fetch his concertina down.

"It's a nice little instrument, isn't it?" he observed, regarding it affectionately, as

he took it out of its case, and drew from it a dismal moan by way of prelude. He accompanied himself, and sang "The White Squall" with much tragic animation, and "Far from the old folks at home" with a pathos that Mrs. Smith declared "a'most brought the tears into one's eyes, if one had a feelin' heart." They then all sang "Auld Lang Syne" in chorus, that being proposed as appropriate to the occasion, although Felix Grey had nothing whatever to do with any of their early memories; he had never "paidled in the burn, and pu'ed the gowans fine" with any of them, and the seas that were to "roar between them" on the morrow rolled no wider than the English Channel. Still they evidently enjoyed announcing melodiously that they "would take a cup of kindness yet,"—and they took it. And then they all parted, feeling that, in spite of the odd jumbling together of different classes and characters —in defiance of the most elementary laws

of caste, the "hodge-podge" served up that evening in Mr. Grey's supper-room had been a successful experiment.

Notwithstanding this conclusion, I don't "advise everybody to try it."

## CHAPTER III.

"YET WHAT BINDS US, FRIEND TO FRIEND?"

CALLA YORKE will never forget to the last day of her life her first journey to France. Not that in these days of travelling it is anything but the most common-place and every-day journey to half the world, but to her then there was no moment in it of common-place every-day life. It was her first going abroad, her first visit to the friends she best loved in their own home, and every little incident connected with it—the jolting drive in the dingy dog-kennel on wheels which Londoners appear contented to accept as a cab, the hive of porters swarming around the arriving vehicles at the station, the

brisk rattle of the baggage-trucks along the platform—all was to her as fresh and pleasing an excitement as if she had never set her foot before in one of the great busy centres of our nineteenth century travelling.

It was evening when they started, too, and the brilliantly-lighted station, the bustle and stir under the gas-lamps, and the darkness beyond, into which they were whirled away, leaving the glare of the gas behind, as they tore along under the quiet stars, seemed to add a spice of romance to her enjoyment. Her face literally beamed with happy smiles as she sat watching the shadowy landscape race by. "Oh! how beautiful!" she whispered to herself sometimes, seeing strange beauty, unseen to other eyes, in the yellow glimmer of distant town or village, in the dim star-lit fields, in the dark clumps of trees, looking in the mysterious shades like great black strange animals sleeping on the plains of

obscurely-outlined landscape darkening away to the horizon.

And when they reached their destination, and she saw the chimneys of steamboats cutting tall lines up across the dark blue sky, smelt the sharp salt sea air, found herself being swept along in a stream of fellow-travellers, and heard the snorting of the engines getting up steam, and people shouting, "This way for the boat! Which boat, sir?—which boat, ma'am? All right, this way!" her heart almost stood still with excitement and pleasure.

All this was such a common thing to Felix Grey; a voyage to the other hemisphere would have been only as an everyday event to him; travelling was indeed as his natural element. It had been a tolerably common every-season excitement to Mrs. King, too, once upon a time, in her days of prosperity. But to Calla all was pure novelty and delight. She was a

child, and was in a child's bright dream-land.

"Am I awake, auntie—*am* I awake?" she said, as they stood on the deck, and heard the water plashing against the sides as the vessel slowly swung from the pier and steamed away.

"Do you like it, Miss Calla?" asked Felix, with a sort of wondering softness. There was something attractive, and yet pathetic, and above all surprising, to him about the exuberant happiness that illuminated the girl's face, and trembled in her voice.

"It is like a dream!" she replied. "Oh! look at the lights—look at the sky! Drink in the sea air! I feel as if I couldn't have enough of it!"

"I am afraid, my dear, you'll have more than enough of it before long," said Mrs. King; "it seems the wind is getting up."

The wind *was* getting up, and so, when

they got into open sea, were the waves, and before three hours were over Calla was not quite so happy.

But when the next morning's sun had risen, and was full and bright in the blue sky—when the waves had calmed down, and the breakfast-bell was ringing in the saloon-cabin, then Calla was in her glory again, perched up on one of the paddle-boxes, rolled mummy-like in a shawl, and her hat tied on comfortably but unbecomingly with a pocket-handkerchief. She was eating a very hard biscuit, and protesting, in answer to Felix's suggestion about "breakfast," that a biscuit in the fresh air was a better breakfast than all the ham, and eggs, and coffee the world could offer, if they must be partaken of in that—she paused for a word sufficiently strong, and wound up with much emphasis, "that dreadful dog-kennel downstairs!"

"*This* dog slept all night in his kennel

very comfortably," said Felix, laughing and tapping his own breast.

"Then you could sleep in a frying-pan or a dust-hole," replied Calla, with a shudder.

The coast of France nearing into clearer view gave her apparently little less delight than the cry of "Land!" gave Columbus, and the scrambling up the narrow gangway to the quay, the cocked hats of the custom-house officers, and the shrill clamour of the foreign tongue, filled her with childish glee.

But by the time they arrived at the Château de la Basse-Rive, Calla, being unaccustomed to this kind of fatigue, and having been strung to a high pitch of excitement during all this her first experience of land and sea-travelling, was very tired, and heartily glad when, with the clanging of a great bell and rolling back of big gates, they drove into the courtyard of the Château.

Then Mrs. Darrell and Isabel Grey appeared hospitably on the threshold to welcome them; then came white-capped and aproned maids and blue-bloused men to take bags and boxes; and then Calla found herself sitting on a straight-backed, stiff-armed velvet couch, with a glass of wine in one hand and a sandwich in the other, Mrs. King beside her similarly provided for, Mrs. Darrell hospitably presiding at the tray of light refreshment, and Isabel taking their bonnets and mantles, and observing that she must run and see that the right boxes were taken to the right apartments, as Fanchette would certainly deposit Felix's portmanteau in the ladies' room, and their box in his.

Mrs. Darrell was genuinely glad to receive her visitors, and welcomed them most hospitably, though without any excitement or flurry. She was always calm and gentle, seldom manifesting any enthusiasm, and still seldomer any astonishment,

at anything. She was a beautiful, stately, slightly-built woman, with the hall-mark of birth and breeding on every feature and gesture. That face, and figure, and air of hers would have sent her to the guillotine in the Reign of Terror, saying as clearly as they did "Aristocrat." Hers was a pale, careworn face, thoughtful and sadly sweet, yet proud and reserved in expression; delicate and patrician in every outline; almost as lovely now that the soft brown hair was streaked with grey as it could have been in her youth. Only those silver threads told her age; her complexion was still clear, and pure, and beautiful in its spotless paleness. Isabel Grey bore a great resemblance to her mother, but was much fairer; her hair was a pale golden blonde, and her eyes of a light and changeful grey, whereas Mrs. Darrell's were of a deep, beautiful brown. Felix had his mother's eyes and something of his mother's air of *noblesse*, but none of his

mother's beauty, and little of her calm, cold languor.

It might have seemed to superficial observers curious that Calla, impulsive and impetuous girl—half child—as she was, should like the cold, stately Mrs. Darrell so well; but Mrs. Darrell was as gentle as she was proud, and Calla was sincerely fond of her. Indeed, although Mr. Darrell was the only member of the family connected with her by ties of kindred, she loved his wife and step-daughter better than himself. Still she liked him. He was a good, kind, formal, and proud, but polished and well-mannered gentleman, of studious and secluded habits. He was benevolently disposed towards young people, but always seemed an immeasurable distance from them.

Calla was tired, and slept soundly her first night at La Basse-Rive. When the next morning came, she was sitting up, broad awake, fresh and happy, surveying

the room in its morning aspect, the sun glinting in through the green blinds, the waxed and polished wooden floor that seemed so strange to her, the red velvet chairs that looked so luxurious, the mahogany deep box-bedstead where her aunt slept, and the great square blue and white china stove in the corner—when there was a tap at the door, and Fanchette entered with coffee and little rolls of bread on a tray.

Then Isabel came in, fresh and fair as the sunny morning, in a loose white morning-wrapper, with her golden hair streaming over her shoulders, and her hands full of roses, rich crimson and pale pink and pure white roses, with the dew upon them.

"Which will you have, Calla? Which will you have, Mrs. King?" she asked, sitting on the foot of Calla's bed, and separating the flowers into little bouquets.

"I think a red one will suit you, Mrs. King. A pink one for your dark hair, Calla. And a white one for me."

"You look like a white rose yourself," observed Calla, who sincerely admired Isabel's blonde beauty.

"Drink up your coffee and eat your roll, instead of paying compliments," replied Isabel, who was as sweet and cool and languid as her mother.

"We are not a bit tired, my dear Bell. We could very well have got up to breakfast, I assure you. You spoil us," said Mrs. King.

"Nobody ever gets up to early coffee here—except me. I do sometimes, and take a run in the garden. When you're dressed, we'll go over the garden. You haven't seen half the place yet."

When the coffee and rolls were disposed of, and the toilette made, they went over the grounds accordingly. Felix and Isabel

did the honours to Calla; Mr. and Mrs. Darrell followed in their steps at a more leisurely pace with Mrs. King.

In the large garden of the Château de la Basse-Rive there were only two borders of dwarf fruit-trees and shrubs, and one small patch of lawn intersected with flower-beds, which could be described as kept in any shape or order; the rest impressed the lookers-on as a wilderness, until they saw the orchard, in comparison with which the garden seemed in apple-pie trim. For the orchard *was* a wilderness, where long grass and nettles flourished knee-deep, and straggling brambles stretched out from the enclosing hedge, and laid traps for the unwary. The field was connected by close ties of kindred with the orchard; the brothers of the orchard brambles straggled there, and members of the nettle family from the orchard had migrated and made settlements in the field. The Darrells' grey pony was grazing

there in peaceful companionship with a brindled cow from a neighbouring farm.

"They send their bull in sometimes, and he runs at us," observed Isabel, in a sweet and dreamy way. "The best thing is to dodge behind a tree. I think he ought to be tied up, and I often say so."

"Then why *don't* they tie him up?" inquired practical Calla, feeling a personal interest in the question, for she had a thoroughly cockney distrust of horned cattle.

"I don't know," replied Isabel, whose sublime indifference was evidently the cause of her ignorance on the point. "Now come through this gate and we'll go to the sea; it isn't a quarter of a mile off."

"But I must get my mantle and my gloves, mustn't I?" said Calla, seeing they were going beyond the boundaries of the Château grounds.

"Why? Are you cold? We don't want mantles and gloves," said Isabel, who

had only added to her morning-dress a large Leghorn hat to keep the sun off.

"We live in a primitive and Arcadian way here, Miss Calla, you see," observed Felix. "We meet nobody but the aborigines, and we don't make a toilette for them. In some things, the life here reminds me pleasantly of the Sandwich Islands—only there—well!—sometimes they don't make any toilette at all. I assure you, Isabel is unusually equipped to-day, in your honour, I suppose; or seeing you had a hat, she thought she'd emulate you. She generally goes about of a morning in a calico poke-bonnet."

"A gipsy sun-bonnet, Felix," corrected Isabel.

They crossed a field or two, turned down a lane, followed a narrow track between a hedge and a cornfield, scrambled down a slope, and so came to the blue sea sparkling in the morning sun and breaking in low whispering waves upon the

sand. Calla, with a cry of delight, flew forward and dabbled her hands in the foam, careless of getting her feet wet; and catching up a great handful of damp sandy sea-weed, buried her face in it and sniffed up the sharp strong briny odour with purest enjoyment. Except on the voyage across the Channel she had not seen the sea for two years; and the fragrance of the "salt sweet foam" came to her like wine to one athirst in the sun.

"Let us sit down here a little," said Isabel. "This is my favourite rock, Calla, where I sit and read. Lean back, so, on this rock—you'll find it comfortable. Now see, that to the right is the village of Lantreuil. Over there to the left is the Château d'Aulnais. It is a splendid place; we must take you there; it belongs to a Mr. Reynolds—an Englishman. He has a yacht, and is always inviting us to go sailing in it. You see just where that little streak of sunshine is, that line running

into the sea is the little pier where they land. The yacht is out now; perhaps if we watch we may see it coming in."

"How *can* people stay at home all their lives!" speculated Felix, looking out to sea, and stretching himself on the sand luxuriously.

"How can they?" echoed Calla. "To be sure, a man need not; but how is a girl to help herself? I can't rush about the world alone. I wish I could! How I should glory and delight in travelling!"

"So should I; but what's the use of wishing?" said Isabel. "I wonder if all the world are born wanderers at heart? or is it only some who have a natural roving taste?"

"Not all, I think; but it is well for the world that the wandering element is born in some," rejoined Felix. "Just think, if each man grew to his birthplace like a limpet to its rock, how little England would be over-crowded, till pestilences

came to sweep off the surplus population, and how the vast continents of Africa, Australia, and America would be left untenanted save by savages! When your population outgrows the produce of your land, it brims and overflows into the great waste lands waiting to receive it; and so things square themselves."

"I suppose many men leave their country and emigrate—not so much from natural roving tastes as because there isn't room for them, and they must go? And that seems hard on them," said Calla.

"As a rule, the trouble they take to hew out for themselves a path through a wild, rough, half-civilized land, would make them a place in their own. It's *work*, real hard work, Miss Calla, is pioneering—the vanguard of civilization have a tough battle to fight. Making your way in a far-off foreign land is no easy task, unless you go into some of the South Sea Islands, and lie under a banana-tree and

eat bread-fruit, and let the world go by."

"I sometimes dream I should like that," said Isabel.

"No, you wouldn't," replied her brother. "There's no intellect nor grandeur of soul ever grows up from the islands of the lotos-eaters. Idleness was never meant to be a good for mankind. There's work enough in the world for all men, and men enough for all work, if it could only be fairly distributed. There's work at home, and work abroad. To each man his fitting work, to each work its fitting executors. But for no man nor woman is a life of torpor and do-nothingness of body and soul intended."

The two girls listened, and Isabel's smooth brow clouded a little as she looked down thoughtfully and sifted a handful of sand, and watched the yellow grains slip through her fingers. Calla, full of the same thought, put it into words, after a few moments reflectively looking at Felix, her

bright face full of eager attention and questioning.

"If an objectless life was intended for no man nor woman, what special work claims each? I have been wondering about that often lately. If one has no special talent, and yet some energy, what field is one called to spend that energy in? It would be useful to wield any talent with, but without the talent it seems like the haft without the blade."

"More like a clasp-knife," he rejoined smiling. "Where the energy is, some talent of some kind is shut up in it—it's bound to open itself in time."

"Not if the spring gets rusted from want of use," said Isabel, softly.

"I think so often," continued Calla, waxing confidential and personal, "what kind of life was meant for a girl like *me*, for instance. I am not much cleverer at one thing than at any other. The one thing I should like to do I am afraid I

could not do. Then what am I best fitted for? I don't want to dream my life away in lotos-eating. I want to do the best I can with it. I feel uncertain, somehow—I don't know——"

"You feel as I do, Calla," interposed Isabel, as she paused, "the want of some object to follow, some place to fill, something to make the centre of one's life."

"You two girls feel that want simply because your lives are not formed and full enough for you yet," said Felix. "And most girls in their quiet stay-at-home existences, I think, must feel the same. But your natures, as well as your lives, are immature now; they are only in the early stages of development. There will be a part and a place for each of you some day. It comes in time to every one. Life trains us up into fitness for our place, whatever it is to be. Only we should be ready when it comes to recognize it and seize it, and take possession of it. I've known people

who let themselves drift past places they were fit for—and they would drift on into a corner where they didn't fit at all at last. When the round man spins and wanders about, and finally gets stuck in the three-cornered hole, it makes one say 'the pity of it!' One knows there was his place somewhere, only in his blindness he couldn't find it. But one feels still an assurance that he will find it yet—in some other world."

There was a strong tendency to optimism about Felix Grey; he had a knack of generally turning the light on the rosier side of things, which contrasted with his young sister's inveterate inclination to seek out the shadowy side.

"A place waiting for each of us—a post for each of us to fill! That's beautiful to think," said Calla, with brightening eyes.

"Though if we have to wait until the next world for it, we may have a long time to wait," suggests Isabel.

"But if we are ready on the look-out, unless ill-luck drives hard against us, we run a very good chance of finding our work on earth," responded the other.

"Don't fancy you are going to plunge suddenly deep into an actual tangible piece of work, and going to paint or sing or study for so many hours a day," said Felix, practically. "When the time comes that you feel your life has no vacancy, when your occupations fill and satisfy your mind so far as it may be satisfied on earth, contenting you for to-day, and still always leading you onwards, upwards, towards something higher yet for the morrow—then you have found your place. And the outside world generally can't tell a bit whether you are in your place or not; only your own soul knows whether it is at home or in exile."

"I hope we shall all find our home some day!" said Calla, hopefully. "There's not much hurry, is there? we are only at the

outset of our path, and are, perhaps, scarcely fit to hold our post yet."

"We are at the outset, yes, and we may end in exile, lost and wandering, after all," said Isabel.

"Why do you say such sad things always, Isabel?" asked Felix, fraternally. "You strike in like a Greek chorus of foreboding. I think you must be dull here; this quiet life seems to have a depressing effect on you. I think you ought to have a change."

"I say sad things because they come across me," replied Isabel, with whose fresh, girlish beauty sad things did indeed seem incongruous! "I *am* dull sometimes; there's nothing stirring to make one anything else *but* dull, generally. I shan't be dull or triste, though, now that Calla is here; it's a great pleasure for me to have her."

"Not half such a pleasure as it is for me to be here!" responded Calla, warmly.

"Ah, children! there you are! I thought

I should find you on Isabel's favourite rock!" said Mrs. Darrell, as the three elder members of the party came along the sands after the young people.

"Bell has been doing the honours, and exhibiting all the 'common objects of the sea-shore,' I suppose?" observes Isabel's step-father.

"She looks well and bright this morning, and she has been looking pale of late. I think having your young friend with you does you good, my pet!" said Mrs. Darrell, lifting Isabel's fair face up into the sunlight fondly.

With that tender smile of maternal love and pride on her face, the mother was as beautiful as her young daughter. There was generally a sadness hidden away in the depths of Mrs. Darrell's eyes, even when she smiled; and when she looked upon her daughter there was always in the very light of her love some shadow of sorrow or memory—it might have been only

the shade that great love ever casts, by its own very height and greatness, standing, as it does so often, between us and the light of perfect joy.

It needed little acuteness of observation to perceive that Isabel Grey was the darling of her mother's heart. This is not to imply that Mrs. Darrell was not deeply attached to her son Felix also; only it is not often that the balance of affection sways exactly level, however slight and almost imperceptible its variation may be; and of these her two surviving children, Isabel certainly was Mrs. Darrell's especial darling. During Felix's long absence, she had become naturally accustomed to live without him; for years he had been only a memory and a hope to her, while her daughter had been a part of her daily life, and growing daily a dearer part. Felix, leading so widely different a life, had, of course, to a certain extent grown into a different tone of thought. They never

clashed, but seldom perfectly agreed in opinion; they lived in a peaceful, affectionate, and happy harmony that yet was not quite perfect unison. Such harmonies of different tones of opinion, however, are often really happier than simple accord.

Through Felix's general optimism of theory, mingling intertwisted with the faith and the hope and the charity that prevailed therein, there ran a thread of almost stern clear-sightedness, and justice that set itself apart from the mercy that co-existed with it, and insisted on playing its own independent *rôle*. On that first morning at La Basse-Rive, as they rambled along the sands, wandering lightly from one subject of conversation to another while they strolled aimlessly on, the two girls fell into raptures about the *Lady of Lyons*, which Calla had had the delight of seeing on one of her rare visits to the theatre, and which Isabel, to whom theatres were almost unknown ground, had

been dreaming over alone in the wilderness yclept a garden.

Felix, however, declined to share in their raptures and their sympathies, at least, as far as regarded the hero. For the sorrows and sufferings of Claude Melnotte, he appeared to have but small compassion. Love-sorrows did not seem to move his heart at all towards the melting mood; and concerning Claude's chiefly self-wrought suffering, his sentiments were comprised in that common, simple, and colloquial application of justice, "Served him right." The girls saw only the pathetic and poetic side of the story; Felix came down practically on "the base conspiracy and deception," from which he swept aside all excuses like cobwebs, with a strong, if merciless, right hand, and which he pronounced, "no matter for what purpose, cowardly and unpardonable."

"A great many things are unpardonable in your eyes, Felix, are they not?" observed Mrs. Darrell, joining in the conversation as she came up with the younger group.

"Well, I trust not so very many, mother, for I never dare to hope my sins will be forgiven otherwise than as I forgive."

"It is easy enough to forgive the sinners whose sins are such as we might ourselves be lured into committing; but not so easy to pardon those who fall before a temptation whose strength we cannot comprehend," said Mrs. Darrell quietly.

"True; but from the full comprehension of the temptations to cowardice and treachery, good Lord deliver us!"

"If you cannot comprehend," Mrs. Darrell rejoined, "you cannot fully forgive. And without forgiveness I think there was never redemption or reformation yet. But you hold, I suppose, all sins irredeemable and unpardonable that fall below the level

to which you can conceive yourself sinking in some erring moment?"

"Mother mine, do you think I am so very hard?" Felix asked, looking in her face in his simple, straightforward way, almost as if he had been a boy at her knee again.

"No, my dear boy, not *hard;* only it seems to me that you lack a little in comprehension of the great truth that if you would redeem and raise from any sin or shame, you must not look down and judge from your height of untempted virtue; you must bend even to the sinner's level and reach your hand to him, and not fear nor scruple to grasp *his* hand and help him on the upward way."

"You are right and true in every word, mother; it is a truth I hope never to fail in recognising. But for all that, a truth, I am afraid, not generally comprehended among women," he added meditatively. "It takes a woman pure, and brave, and

strong to dare to see it and act upon it. *You* might dare to plunge your hand into pitch, and draw it out again undefiled," he continued, with an unusual intonation of confidence and affection in his voice (for they were not, on the whole, a demonstrative family), "but—well, will you think me a misogynist for saying that I don't fancy we have so very many like you in the world?"

Felix admired his mother sincerely, and possibly accredited her with all the more virtues because he was dimly conscious that he did not thoroughly comprehend her. At his unusual effusion of filial appreciation, Mrs. Darrell must have been highly gratified; she returned her son's smile very tenderly, but her colour deepened suddenly into a painful flush for which there certainly was not the slightest occasion, and for a moment something seemed to dim the clear regard of her large, mournful brown eyes as they were fixed

with a half-sad affection on his face for a moment, and then turned somewhat tremulously away.

She was a woman whom her habitual, tranquil, and gentle reserve befitted well, yet when there came a little life, and emotion, and colour into her pale, calm, pensive face, it lent it a new beauty, a new interest; it seemed to throw a glimmer of light upon the possibility of a past loveliness, which had gone from her as utterly as the glory of the after-glow melts off from an Alpine peak, and leaves it cold, and white, and calm in the closing evening. Sometimes when a passing flash of light and colour changed her face, and the close, soft, clinging veil of her reserve seemed to stir and flutter a little, although it never fell aside, a physiognomist looking on her would wonder whether "even in those ashes slept their wonted fires?" or whether the fire had once flamed so fiercely that it had long ago burnt itself out and left no

lingering life-warmth in the grey, cold ashes of some dead passion.

She looked as if, like Galatea, she had gone back to marble for refuge from mortal pain. She must have been far more beautiful than her daughter when at her daughter's age. It was no wonder that when she was Gertrude Glynnley, an orphan girl of scarcely seventeen—the penniless daughter of a ruined father—well born, well bred, highly educated, reduced from comparative wealth to absolute poverty—making the long, weary voyage to Australia to join some relatives there, she should have so attracted, won, and fixed the love of Matthew Grey, passenger by the same vessel, going out to seek his fortune, that they were married almost immediately on their landing.

Nor was it much of a marvel (though some of Mr. Darrell's friends considered it amazing) that, long years after that first wooing and winning, when at the sea-side,

by a chance introduction Mr. Darrell became acquainted with this fair, pale widow with her large and lovely eyes, he should have decided on a week's acquaintance to ask her to be his wife.

She was residing in England again then. Matthew Grey, after some ten or twelve years of marriage, had died in Australia. Gertrude Grey had returned to her native land, and had been living there for some time, poor, but not penniless, leading a quiet life retired from society, and devoted to the care of her little girl, the youngest child and only daughter. Of her two sons, who had also accompanied her to England, the eldest had married and died; the younger, Felix, had gone back to Australia, hating an idle life of dependence on his mother, boy as he was in years, with all a man's longing to work his own way in the world, and availing himself gladly of an offered chance in the other hemisphere, while his brother worked equally

hard to open for himself in England a career which would probably have been a bright one, had it not been cut short by his early death.

Thus Mrs. Grey was left with only little Isabel to comfort her in her mourning and her loneliness, when Mr. Darrell met her first. He was supposed to be a confirmed old bachelor then, and she, too, had left her youth long behind, although her charm and her grace seemed imperishable, and had well outlasted the fickle glory of girlish bloom. Her very sadness and solitude held a certain attraction for this confirmed old bachelor, who was also sad and solitary, and a very brief acquaintance with Gertrude Grey proved to him that he was by no means so confirmed in celibacy as he and his friends had thought.

"And so the bells rang and these two were wed."

Whether Mrs. Darrell loved her second husband with "The love of women when they love their best," no one knew. The

ever-present sadness in her eyes might have been taken to imply that her heart lay buried in that far-off Australian grave, and her devoted love for Isabel might have seconded the idea.

But there was no doubt that the Darrells led a very contented, comfortable, and peaceful life together. Mr. Darrell was kind and fatherly to his fair young step-daughter, and never manifested any tendency to jealousy of her mother's evident devotion to her. As to Felix, he got on excellently well with his step-father. To say that they were warmly attached to each other would perhaps be employing too strong terms; but having so recently been thrown together in their new relationship, strangers as they were till then, it was not altogether to be expected that they should have become such truly good friends. There even seemed to be a sort of congeniality in the grain of the core of both natures, different as they were on the

surface. Some radical resemblance there must have been to move them so mutually and speedily to a sincere liking, esteem, and respect. So there was peace and comfort in the mixed family at the Château de la Basse-Rive.

Perhaps for a young girl like Isabel, pretty and graceful, and full of a soft susceptibility to excitement, and romantic dreams and fancies, under her superficial languid serenity, the life there was a trifle too isolated and eventless and secluded. But Mr. and Mrs. Darrell liked it well, and were perfectly contented. They both disliked the life in great cities, and were indifferent to society—an indifference which might have seemed strange in a woman of Mrs. Darrell's appearance, manner, and culture, but with which her husband agreed too thoroughly to wonder at it. Although she was so well fitted to shine in the society she almost wholly abjured, he regarded her indifference—indeed, her aver-

sion—as the feeling most fit and natural to the autumn of a life whose early summer, like his own, had been clouded by domestic sorrow—or rather, perhaps, he simply accepted the fact, and never thought of inquiring at all into the reason of a taste which so perfectly coincided with his own.

## CHAPTER IV.

"OH, HEAVEN! THAT ONE MIGHT READ THE BOOK OF FATE!"

LIFE at the Château de la Basse-Rive might not have suited every taste. Some would have voted it slow and dull, for its daily level was certainly somewhat monotonous. Others would have considered that its habits and customs comprised rather too much of "roughing it."

Calla delighted in it; the primitiveness of the household proceedings there afforded her a perpetual source of amusement, while Mrs. King enjoyed the complete change of life and manners quietly. The servants cost rather less trouble than the average French domestics employed by

English families usually do; and the wheels of the establishment, as a rule, ran pretty smoothly—in their way.

The rule of La Basse-Rive was that when a thing was not done that ought to have been done, its omission was tranquilly endured; and when a thing was done that ought not to have been done, its intrusive existence was simply ignored. It did occasionally happen, to be sure, that the pig took advantage of the windows opening on to the courtyard to enter the salon and grout with curious nose beneath the pedals of the piano; nor was it a thing quite unknown for a gratified "cluck-cluck" beneath the dining-table to announce the presence of an adventurous hen who had strayed thither in search of crumbs. In these cases the intruders were summarily, but serenely, without any sensation or surprise, driven back to their own quarters.

The monotony of life was occasionally varied, also, by such incidents as the

breaking loose of a neighbour's bull, consequently breaking down of the Château fence, and flight of all the family to barricade themselves in the house—or the appearance in the courtyard of a vagrant sheep, frantic excitement of the dogs, and compensation for damaged wool demanded by indignant owner, to say nothing of the milder excitements of occasional but not frequent visits to and from the only English families near, the Reynolds's, inhabitants of the Château d'Aulnais some three miles off on one side, and the Smiths, who occupied La Maison Blanche, about five miles off on the other.

Felix and Calla still and always got on very well together. Indeed their friendship reached the height of perpetually playing at enemies. They argued, disagreed, fought pitched battles, renewed the same conflict day after day, called each other mutually "mine enemy," and were the very best of friends. Isabel enjoyed

Calla's society with all her heart; the two young girls were on the most sisterly terms. They went for long, wandering rambles with Felix by sunlight and moonlight, were up and out on the broad, lonely sands before breakfast, and out in the silent fields and shady lanes at night when the after-dinner coffee was done.

They were never dull, reading, talking, sentimentalising over books and theories, Felix relating anecdotes of his travels according to travellers' wont, and the girls listening with girlish enthusiasm.

In Felix's anecdotes a certain friend of his, named Julius Lusada, figured frequently, in fact, figured as the hero more frequently than Felix himself, for the latter's stories were not all purely autobiographical nor related for the display of self to advantage.

"What is this Mr. Lusada like?—and where is he now?—and have you known

him long?" asked Calla one day, she being a true daughter of Eve.

"He's somewhere in the West. If the war had lasted, he would have been in the thick of it now. But as it is, I suppose he's on some speculation down in Southern California by this time. I have known him ever since I left Australia. Didn't I ever tell you how he and I first became acquainted? No? Well, then, it was in an odd way enough. It was when I made the voyage from Melbourne to San Francisco. The cook and steward on board was a handsome young fellow, with what some of us interpreted as rather a sulky, dangerous look, though I never could see it; it only seemed to me that he was well able to take his own part—so well that even the captain didn't meddle with him overmuch. I took rather a fancy to him from the first, and was with him a good deal. It wasn't a passenger-ship, you know—only a rough trading-vessel, the *Cormorant*, so

there was no cabin-company, and I used to be very often talking to Sandy, as they called him there; but he never told me much about himself, except that he'd lost his pile in Australia, and was working his way back to his own country. Well, in San Francisco we parted, he and I, and went our different ways; but a strange wind blew us together a year or two afterwards."

"How? Tell us," demanded the two girls together.

Felix hesitated a moment, and an amused smile twitched the corner of his mouth, though his eyes were grave enough.

"Well," he then said, "I had got myself into a bit of a scrape—it was through sticking to a friend, so I don't regret it to this day. I was—to put it in the most delicate manner—resigning myself philosophically to a temporary detention until it should please the law of the land to examine into my case, and pronounce whether

I was a good fellow or a bad one. But the examination never came off."

He looked at the two girls, and could not repress a broad smile at the amazed curiosity on their faces. Then he went on, falling into his usual narrative vein, and evidently getting more interested in this memory as the past scene shaped itself more clearly before him.

"The prison doors were broken open that night. How well I recollect the threatening murmur outside, and the crash of the bursting bolts! It was a case of lynch-law. The Vigilantes were out (men in masks, you know, bent on rough, retributive justice)," he added parenthetically. "They got in, of course—they generally did get in where they had a mind to enter. Well, they locked the sheriff in his room. They came to where I was, and in the figure and voice of one of the ringleaders—it's a figure not to be mistaken—I recognised my friend Sandy, the quondam

steward. We gripped hands then and there. The sheriff saw no more of me. Lusada and I were off together before dawn."

"But you said it was a case of lynch-law?" questioned Calla, ever inquisitive. "Who were they after then? Not you?"

"Not me! —no, I rather think not! If they had been after *me*, I shouldn't have been here retailing these reminiscences to you now; and the grey wolves would probably have had the felicity of picking my bones."

"Did they kill the man, then?"

"Look here, children—you'd better drop the curtain there. The rest of the story is not for you. You've heard all *my* part in it."

Isabel and Calla let that branch of the subject pass as he bid them; but they were primed with relays of other inquiries with which they assailed Felix almost simultaneously, and with eager emphasis.

"How *did you* get into prison?"

"Was it a *real* prison?"

"Why did *he* join the Vigilantes?"

"Why was he disguised as a cook on board the vessel?"

"Why was he passing under a false name?"

"He joined the Vigilantes for justice," responded Felix, who apparently could see no flaw in his hero. "Law and justice don't always go hand-in-hand, even here; and in that rough life in the wildest part of the country, where the administration of the law was deficient where it wasn't corrupt, as a rule, by all *I* saw," he added, being a young man who was habitually guarded in his statements, "the Vigilantes who took the law into their own hands had generally a kind of wild justice on their side. And as to disguise, he wasn't *disguised.* He was working his passage over because he couldn't afford to pay it. He was dressed in fustians because he couldn't

afford black broadcloth. He was known as "Sandy" just because the name happened to have stuck to him (he's a fellow with tawny hair and a leonine beard), and he didn't care to give his own name just then; but there was no real change in the *man* ever since I've known him. Except that he looks prosperous and happy instead of sullen and shut up in a sort of rough reserve, the Lusada I said good-bye to last year—in all the flush of success, with his handsome face, and his dashing, daring ways, —is the very "Sandy" I knew as steward on the *Cormorant.* He has made money and lost, and made again. It was he who was my companion and my leader on that expedition down the South Pacific Coast which was to make us all millionaires, but didn't. He is well off now though; at the top of the wheel."

"I should like to see him," said Isabel.

"Somehow I don't quite think I should like him," observed Calla.

"I think you would," rejoined Felix. "He's a man who has led the roughest, wildest life, and carried through it the gentleness of a woman, and the courtesy of a prince—when he chooses—a man whose adventures dwarf mine into mole-hills, a tall, splendid fellow who isn't soon forgotten when once known, I can tell you!"

"Well, I should be very glad to see this hero, and compare him with your glowing description of him!" said Calla incredulously, rather impressed in her heart, but determined not to acknowledge it.

"*Mine enemy* will not allow a single good quality in my friend," said Felix, smiling. "By-the-by, Bell, what did you do with that packet of photographs I gave you to take care of when I went to London?—there was one of Lusada there," he added.

"I don't know," replied Isabel reflectively; "they lay on the drawing-room

table, and then mamma put them in the cupboard, and then I had them out to look at, and then—oh, I think they were put in the bureau."

"Well, come and let us look in the bureau then, and we'll show Miss Calla that her enemy's friend is a better-looking fellow than she thought possible, going upon the adage that 'birds of a feather flock together.'"

"After what you've told us, that adage accounts for your proficiency in cooking. I'm always wondering whom you are going to poison when I see you making love to Marie Rose over the bouillon. Probably *I* should be the victim, I know, so I never begin to eat until I see my enemy has dipped into the dish first; then I feel safe," observed Calla.

"It wouldn't be in the bouillon I should put poison if I wanted to rid my path of this especial torment; it would be in the cheesecakes," said Felix, who had learnt

by this time most of Calla's tastes, of which one prominent one was a serious inclination for cheesecakes—"by one, by two, by three."

They opened the bureau, and began searching in the drawers and pigeon-holes for the packet of photographs. The interior disposition of the bureau was quite characteristic of and consistent with the family customs of the Château de la Basse-Rive.

Each drawer was crammed till it could scarcely be opened; each pigeon-hole was overflowing. Old letters, old manuscripts of Mr. Darrell's, magazines, papers, extracts, engravings, crochet-patterns and old fashion-plates of modes extinct as the Dodo, were crowded together and rolled in bundles without any attempt at arrangement.

Isabel had lately taken the principal possession of the bureau, and there lay knick-knacks, broken trinkets, ribbons,

valentines, books, and souvenirs of hers in heaps, amongst the reams of waste paper that would never be used or thought of, yet certainly never destroyed while the Darrell family reigned over the establishment. In one of the drawers Felix's packet came to light, and he showed the photograph of Julius Lusada to Calla and Isabel.

"H'm, rather stagy, but—well, I suppose he is handsome!" observed Calla, critically. "Oh, Isabel, do let us put this place a little bit tidy! Look! here's a champagne cork, a pink ribbon, and a pill-box! and what do you want all these old newspapers for?"

"I don't know; I suppose they have all got something in them," said Isabel tranquilly.

"What's this rolled up in one of them?" continued Calla, pulling something out from the back of a pigeon-hole, and extracting from folds of papers a faded

red leather folding portrait-case. "Two portraits. Who are these, dear?"

"Why, it's poor Glynnley's portrait! Why on earth have you poked it away here, Bell? and is this his wife?" asked Felix.

"It's my brother that died," explained Isabel to Calla. "And this is his wife; you know she died too. There, see, their names are written 'Glynnley Grey; Rachel Grey.' Wasn't she pretty? I saw her once, when I was at school."

"I never saw her; I had gone back to Australia when Glynnley married," said Felix. "It's a sweet face, Isabel, if she was like this. Why do you let it lie here? it's the only portrait I've seen of poor Glynnley."

"I put it here because it upsets mamma so to look at it," replied Isabel. "She made herself quite ill with brooding and grieving when she found it in her old desk. I think it re-opened all the old wounds

just as if Glynnley and Rachel had only died last week. She gave it me; and I knew she wanted me to keep it out of her daily sight, although she did not say so. I meant to lock it up; but it is quite as safe here. Mamma never comes here now; she has quite given these pigeon-holes up to me."

"That's my good thoughtful little sister," said Felix, approvingly. "But I am glad we found it; I am glad to have seen this portrait of the sister-in-law I never knew."

"She looks very sweet and charming. Did she die long after him?" asked Calla, sympathetically.

"Very soon, I think; they died almost together, I have heard; and they had only been married two or three months—was it not sad? And yet I don't know that their fate was so unhappy. If they were really fond of each other, it would have been far sadder for the survivor if

one had outlived the other long," said Isabel.

"But to die so young—and so beautiful!" mused Calla, looking pensively on the faded shadows of the two young faces that must indeed in life have possessed rare beauty. Rachel was a fair, child-like girl, delicate as a flower. Glynnley had evidently had his full share of the family beauty; he must have been far handsomer than his brother—indeed, as Calla could not help noticing, it seemed as if Felix had been unfairly dealt with in the distribution of attractions, and Glynnley and Isabel had come in for the lion's portion. However, Felix's face was dear and familiar to her now, and she would not have had him change it even for Apollo's features.

"Now, Calla—Felix! do put those portraits away now. I am afraid mamma will be coming," said Isabel uneasily.

Calla felt much interested in the story of Glynnley Grey and his bride and their

early death; it appealed strongly to her sympathies and her imagination; and directly Felix had left them, she turned to Isabel with inquiries as to the "full, true, and particular" history; but Isabel seemed to know very little beyond the bare fact of their death. She had been a child at school at the time, and had been forbidden to talk to her mother on the subject, as the blow had fallen so heavily on Mrs. Grey that her health suffered severely from it, and agitation was very bad for her.

"I think Glynnley must have been her especial hope and pride—her eldest boy, you know; and you can see what a fine, handsome fellow he was. She has never *quite* got over it, I fancy—never been quite the same," said Isabel, softly and sadly. "And Glynnley's name is never, never mentioned here, Calla. And though mamma and I love each other now more than all the whole world besides, even *I* never venture to hope a day will come when I

may touch upon that subject and talk it over with her."

So Calla's wish to hear the whole story of Glynnley Grey remained ungratified; although of the hero of the other photograph they had that morning unearthed from the recesses of the bureau she heard again and often, for Felix was always ready and willing to talk of his friend Lusada. And in her memory, that girlish retentive memory which stored away all anecdotes and ideas and suggestions savouring of romance, as a child retains every detail of a fairy-tale, she laid away together the names of Julius Lusada and Glynnley Grey. One was a dead-and-gone past; the other was as far off, remote, and dream-like to her as that buried past itself; yet in her youthful reveries she often dreamt over these two names till other thoughts washed over them and hid them away, and she forgot, little deeming that the time would come when all those overflowing

thoughts and dreams would ebb, and yet leave those two names graven uneffaced.

She had always known that Mrs. Darrell had lost her eldest son, and had hitherto never thought much about the loss; but now the few words she had heard from Isabel inspired her with a new sympathy and a deeper affection than ever for Isabel's serene, sad-eyed mother. She was perhaps too young and inexperienced to fully realise the depth of a great sorrow; but she observed now, with a sense of awe and sympathy and reverence, as if she had been standing by a grave, the utter silence always guarded on the subject of Glynnley Grey. She would as soon have thought of trying to wrench open a tomb as of making any allusion before Mrs. Darrell to the forbidden subject. Nor did she ever think that this reserve so zealously kept was at all strange. She knew that Mrs. Darrell was of the deep

natures that suffer deeply and silently. As to Mrs. Darrell's own family, they were so thoroughly accustomed to the silence on that point—it had become such a matter of course—that they no more dreamt of thinking it peculiar than of breaking through it.

The June days went peacefully and beautifully by, and the day drew near when Mrs. King and Calla were to return to London. They were all more or less sorry as the time came. Mrs. King's society was very welcome at La Basse-Rive, all the more welcome that there was only a very small amount of cultivated and intellectual English society to be had for many miles around. Calla's bright presence was like sunshine in the house, and brightened often into equal gaiety her quiet, dreamy-eyed friend, Isabel. Mrs. Darrell, fond of Calla herself, held her still dearer on account of her healthy and enlivening influence over Isabel. They

would all miss her when she left them.

As their last evening together was a fine one, the three young people, of course, went off together for a farewell starlight ramble. They took the path to the sands, and loitered by the sea. The sky was grey and mysterious, and light, floating clouds drifted between the stars and veiled them here and there; but the moon was full and bright, the sea was calm, and a broad, bright path of moonlight led away from the shore, straight across the grey waters. Where did it seem to stretch away to?—No earthly land surely.

One little vessel crossed that road of light—a black speck in the flood of brightness.

"One fancies it is sailing right along the moonlight to the islands of the blest," said Calla.

"But the night is calm; it will not sail so far," said Isabel. "And yet there have been wrecks on this coast."

"It need not go to the Island of Avalon for beauty; earth is beautiful enough," said Calla, glancing along the sands that lay yellow in the moonlight. "How bright it is—one could see to write," she continued, slowly scratching words with Felix's stick on the sand.

"What are you writing, Calla?" asked Isabel. "G-o-o—ah! '*Good-bye.*' That's the right word, isn't it?"

"Not the right word," interposed Felix. "Why have we no word in English to express the French *au revoir!* or the German *auf Wiedersehen?* We'll all be here together again next Summer, I hope."

"Things don't repeat themselves, they say," observed Isabel with a little sigh. "Something will be changed."

"And this is our very, very last evening walk," said Calla, in a voice unusually soft and subdued.

Felix looked at her, and saw that her dark eyes were drooping as if with tears.

"Are you sorry then, Calla? We can't be sorry to see you so; it makes us feel we've won in you a true friend—so true, young as she is, as never to change."

"Never," she answered earnestly. "How could I forget you all when you are the only real friends I have, and Isabel the only real companion?"

"And am I counted as one of '*all?*'" inquired Felix. "You have not known me for as many years, of course. I wonder if you would forget me if I were not 'one of them?'"

"You know I would not. I am sure we are just as good friends as if we had known each other always. You have done me so much good—you have brought such a new influence and new thoughts into my life," she added, with a confiding frankness which a year or two hence would be impossible, but which now seemed the most natural thing in the world to them all; "you see so straight, and judge so broadly and truly, I

feel that if ever I were in a maze of difficulties, and could not disentangle right from wrong, you would make it all clear for me."

"You would not need my help," said Felix. "You are true and clear-seeing, and strong yourself, and not apt to be misled into mazes of sophistries and subtleties. You would burst through the tangle, and break free into the light."

"Everyone can stand alone, I suppose; and yet it's solitary to be left leaning on one's own strength. I don't like being alone. I shall miss you so, Calla!" said Isabel. "We were always good friends, weren't we? but this time we seem to have got on better and understood each other better than ever. And Felix has been with us; and we have been such a nice trio."

"We will go on understanding and liking each other better and better as we get older," rejoined Calla sanguinely, her

native brightness and gaiety re-asserting itself; "and when we're quite old, old fogies, we'll be a nice trio still!"

"You in cap-fronts and corkscrew curls —grey, profusely sprinkled with white— and a fat poodle-dog each! I also with a respectable bald pate, fringed with a very few hairs, and those silver!" pictured Felix. "We shall all cough and expatiate on our ailments, and lean on a stick with our emaciated and claw-like hands; and we shall habitually address each other as 'Friend of my youth,'—and perhaps quarrel and part at last about which of us is the oldest, and are we eighty-one or eighty-two; for age will be a delicate point with us then!"

"We will prove friends can be true for life!" said Calla, in all the joyous earnestness of her confident young heart.

"One great test of faith is whether we can be true *with* each other as well as true *to* each other," observed Felix.

"Is not the last enough?" said Isabel. "What Milton wrote of Melancholy seems as true of absolute Truth,

> 'Her saintly visage is too bright,
> To hit the sense of human sight.'"

"Then let us rather blind ourselves by daring to gaze at her than bandage our eyes from the light!" said Felix; and Calla echoed the sentiment with bright eager eyes that seemed as if no truth could dazzle or bewilder them.

In these random words they unconsciously struck the key-notes of their differing natures. In Felix there was a certain stedfastness of strength, a firm and fearless following of his standard, not defying, but enduring, the wounds it cost —in Calla the courage of latent passion, the inherent truth-worship of absolute purity of soul, that enabled these two to pierce through mists wherein Isabel would lose herself in a maze of dreams and veil her dazed eyes if the sun broke

through, and perhaps turn away to follow a Will o' the Wisp. She was her mother's child, in heart and soul. Yet from this innate and unperceived difference could no one venture to forecast that their destiny should be happier than hers.

Not only our weakness, not only our wavering, not only our error or our crime, shipwreck our lives for us. Sometimes over such reefs the vessel rides light and safe, and runs its risk and weathers the storm, and anchors in its harbour unhurt. And sometimes on the very rocks of our own faith and strength and truth, the frail bark of our happiness drives to surer wreck than on any shoals of sin. Yet better so to sink, and sinking to fly our true colours to the last, than through those shoals and shallows to drift on a devious passage to a seeming safety.

We cannot see towards what shore we steer; we can but steer straight on our course by our own Polar star. We may drive against

the granite rock of our own faith, and shatter the ship that carries the cargo of all our joys; but better so than to seek such safe anchorage as tempts us to swerve aside to the smooth shore where the sirens sing.

# BOOK II.

## IN THE PLEASANT LAND OF BOHEMIA.

"How should Love—
When the cross-lightnings of four chance-met eyes
Flash into fiery life from nothing—follow
Such dear familiarities of dawn?"

TENNYSON—*Aylmer's Field.*

## CHAPTER V.

### "SOLE DAUGHTER OF MY HOUSE AND HEART!"

NOTWITHSTANDING Calla's genuine regret at leaving La Basse-Rive, she really appeared, and was, as much delighted to enter London again as she had been to leave it. Was it not *home?* Not a very luxurious or magnificent home to *her*, certainly; their nest near the chimney-pots was a very modest one; and Mrs. King was half surprised, and more than half gratified, by the girl's outspoken gladness at being again in "the dear, dear old place! the grandest city in all the world!" of whose supremacy among cities, however, Calla, not having any experience of any other cities beyond a day at Southampton

and a week at Liverpool, was scarcely a competent judge.

Her heart bounded as the train slackened along the bridge across the well-known dear dingy river, which a little way out of London is so fair. She regarded the very chimney-pots with absolute affection; she welcomed the columns of smoke; the sea of dingy red and black tiles looked to her almost as lovely as the broad, blue ocean. It was not a bright day; it was one of the days of which Felix was wont to say "there was no sky, only atmosphere, and that muggy!" But there seemed sunbeams in all the air to Calla.

Her eager eyes watched the shops and streets go by—and they went by so slowly, as the cab lumbered on!—until the vehicle drew up at 21, Clarence Street.

The door flew open instantly; the landlady appeared on the threshold, smiling graciously and with unusual *empressement;* behind her was Polly, on the broad grin

with excitement. Innocent Calla interpreted this excitement and *empressement* as a "welcome home;" but it was not that quite pure and simple.

"There's a nice little surprise for you, mum, upstairs, mum," ejaculated Polly.

"Be quiet, Polly," said Mrs. Smith, severely. "I hope as you'll be gratified, ma'am, and Miss, too. In the drawing-room, if you please, ma'am."

Wondering what the surprise could be, and why they were honoured by an invitation into the drawing-rooms, Mrs. King hurried upstairs; Calla, of course, was up before her, and had flung open the drawing-room door.

There was an unusual display of flowers in the window and on the mantel-piece; an unusually magnificent meal spread with Mrs. Smith's best china set out upon the table; and in one corner of the room stood a large trunk. But Calla saw only one thing in all the room—a man's figure—a big,

dark, bearded man. She stopped short with a cry of half-doubt, half-delight, and the blood flamed into her face.

"Why, my little girl! my little girl! and is it you? and you've not forgotten me, then?" he said gladly and smiling.

"Oh, papa! papa!"

Calla, breathless, could say no more; she threw herself into his arms; and the first tears of pure joy she had ever shed gushed from her eyes, as she sobbed upon his breast.

Mrs. King's surprise and pleasure and welcome followed of course. She was sincerely astonished. In her secret heart she had sometimes fancied and feared that Tom Yorke, her errant brother-in-law, would never be seen back in England again, and that, beyond occasional letters and remittances (the latter not too frequent, but as frequent as poor, reckless Tom could afford), Calla would never know anything more of her father.

He, perhaps, did not know how nearly he hit on the truth when he said—

"Well, Sarah, did you think I was going to leave this little maid on your hands for ever?"

"You are not going to take her away?" said Mrs. King, with a sudden look of anxiety, realising that if he meant to carry Calla away to the other side of the world, his return might not, to Calla's aunt, at least, be such a blessing as it had at first appeared.

"Take her away?" questioned Mr. Yorke. "Oh, back to America, you mean? Why, I'm not going back myself, not for a while, at least. I've made enough, with the prospects I have in London, to get on for a time here. And beyond that time I don't look. I've done with looking into the future long ago. Now, in the present, here am I, here's my little daughter, and here's my good sister, to whom I trusted her. I've got a little money in my

pocket (I daresay you're surprised at that; you can't be more surprised than I was), and we've got to spend it."

Calla's father had never spoken a truer word than when he said he never looked beyond the present. Money burnt his pocket; economy was a word not in his dictionary; saving was to him a thing unknown. He might have perhaps understood the putting away of a hundred pounds in a bank, but then he never had a hundred pounds at a time to put away; he could comprehend that by repeating that transaction of investing a hundred ponnds ten times over, he would be in possession of a thousand pounds and interest. But the equally simple arithmetic which would have proved to him that successive sovereigns and half-sovereigns would in time make up a hundred pounds, he never could understand. If he had ever had money enough to think it worth saving, he might have invested it, but then, probably, he

would have chosen some bubble bank paying 20 per cent.

To see Tom Yorke pay a cab, dipping his hand into a pocket full of gold and silver, loose and promiscuously mingled, and asking "what was the fare?" marked at once, to any observant eye, to which particular species of the great genus Man he belonged. An amiable and docile species, yet withal somewhat dangerous; easy to tame, but difficult to domesticate. He was thoroughly Bohemian, reckless, handsome, good-natured—just the sort of father a daughter always loves and pets and spoils, and is spoilt by in return. People were often impatient and indignant with him for "wasting his time or his money," or "throwing away his chances," but they generally liked him well, nevertheless. Sarah King could not help being fond of her graceless brother-in-law in a deprecating, half-compassionate kind of way; he was generally "poor

Tom!" to her, and even while she blamed him, and heaped severe (though, to say the truth, too often just), judgments on his head, there was always a soft corner in her heart that he could reach. As for Calla, she had never dreamt for a moment of questioning the wisdom of any of her father's proceedings, and the filial affection that had been one of the strongest feelings of her childhood, blazed up now into a brighter flame than ever.

How much they had to talk of! all the mutual news of years to hear and tell! Calla was overflowing with chatter about the Darrells and Felix Grey, of course. Was it not odd, she said, that papa should never have met Felix in America? The idea of its being "odd" that two wandering travellers should not meet in America, furnished some material for mirth to Mr. Yorke, who, being in a hilarious mood, laughed at everything—the old, hearty, jovial laugh which rang through Calla's

childish memories a gay refrain—which, now heard once more after so long a lapse of silence, filled her with a joy of which the excitement was almost painful.

Tom Yorke appeared to be equally joyful on his side at this re-union. He was full of paternal pride and affection, and was evidently prepared to find fresh manifestations of brilliance to move him to laughter or of good sense to waken his admiration, every time his daughter opened her lips. Mrs. King saw with mild dismay that her care not to flatter and "spoil" Calla, and her endeavours to preserve her from the pitfall of vanity, were likely to prove quite wasted trouble now that a father had appeared upon the scene who exclaimed, "Good, that! very good!" and "Clever little puss!" upon the slightest possible opportunity. He was very full, of course, of anecdotes about the American civil war. Calla would gladly have made him into a hero; but he spoilt his chances

of being raised on a pedestal of martial glory by candidly confessing that a little "commissariat" business and a good deal of newspaper correspondence was all that *he* had had to do with the great conflict.

But to all his hearsay anecdotes of fire and field, Calla listened with breathless interest. Nor did she forget to inquire after everybody in America, native or English, public or private, whose name she had ever heard mentioned with any interest by Felix Grey; and foremost on the list stood, of course, Julius Lusada. Mr. Yorke thought he knew that name—thought he had seen the fellow somewhere—dashing filibustering fellow—a friend of Felix Grey's, eh?

"Well, you all seem mighty fond of Felix! what sort of a fellow is he? I remember I used to hear from his mother about his being such a 'good boy' that I always pictured him as one of those quiet fellows who are sure to be up to mischief.

He's not that, then, eh? His mother's a charming woman; I bet he's not as good-looking as she is!"

The day after his return, Mr. Yorke took Calla out, and bade her choose herself a dress, a hat, and a mantle in Regent Street. He had beeu lucky, and he wished to see his little daughter well got-up, he said, surveying her attire with depreciatory eyes.

The next morning Calla stood unusually long before the glass arraying herself. She had never been so well-dressed before —at least, not since the days of her childhood, when her small embroidered frocks and tiny silk shoes had helped to melt away the money that melted all too fast. Now, as she settled the pretty hat, with its long curling ostrich feather, on her, for once, neatly braided hair, and noticed the graceful contours that the new costume seemed to lend her figure (though it only discovered the possibilities of grace that had

been hitherto wasted), and heard the soft frou-frou rustle, and looked on the shimmering blue of her trained silk skirt, she felt for perhaps the first time in her life an interest and a delight in her personal appearance and apparel. Mrs. King had never encouraged her to think much about such things, having a virtuous horror of conceit and coquetry; but the good aunt might have spared her caution, for Calla was only too careless and indifferent, and delighted to be let alone. The feminine instinct, with which most girls are born, and their possession of which they manifest even from their babyhood, developed singularly late in Calla Yorke, and only now began to take its rightful place.

Polly, with Mrs. King, assisted at Calla's toilette. It was to Polly an affair of great importance. She took up a fluting of the blue silk dress between her finger and thumb, having—from habit—given the said members a preliminary rub on her

apron to purify them for the contact.

"Lor, Miss Calla, it really be a *lovely* silk! I never did think to see you in sich a one! Who'd ever 'a thought as your Pa was sich a 'igh gentleman! I 'ope 'e ain't too 'igh to stop here, for he's the grandest gentleman as ever we've 'ad."

Mr. Yorke's prosperity was indeed a popular theme in the household. For Calla, in her well-worn and out-grown frocks, with her open and laughing economies, her frank contentment in their frugal life; Calla, generally regarded as a "genteel" but penniless orphan, with only the probable career of nursery-governesshood before her, they had never anticipated the sudden appearance of a wealthy and liberal father. They appraised his wealth according to the lavishness of his expenditure, and consequently exaggerated it considerably; and in the shining light of Mr. Yorke's glory, even the lamp of Felix Grey's popularity was eclipsed.

Tom Yorke liked to be a centre of attraction, and he did not contemplate moving from Clarence Street—at least, not for a little time. The rooms would do very well for the present, he said. When they wanted to give a party, why then, of course, they must move, and then would be time enough.

He had no idea of leading a solitary and secluded life in London. He wanted to see people; he wanted his little daughter to be seen. He had letters of introduction, and presented them right and left; he looked up old friends, the majority of whom held some post in the wide field of literature, which yet never widens enough for all the jostling combatants thereon to find elbow room now-a-days.

Tom Yorke's had not been an unknown name in journalism once, and his talent was of that kind which generally sets a brilliant mark on ephemeral literature of the day, but seldom or never leaves a trace

when that day has gone the way of all days.

It was through him that his sister-in-law, Sarah King, had first gained a corner in the contested ground from which she had since then earned the chief part of her slender income. Tom Yorke had retreated in disgust from the closely-serried ranks long ago. Now, not being absolutely compelled thereto, he wanted to take up his old weapon, the pen, again.

He often took Calla with him on his rounds of visits; and sometimes she sat silent, horribly bored, and sometimes listened with eager eyes to some conversation on travels, literature, or the drama.

One day he came home with an invitation to a party the next evening for himself and Calla, and wanted to take his sister-in-law too, assuring her that "everybody would be glad to see her; and what difference could one more or less in a room make?"

Mrs. King smiled and shook her head, and quietly set to work, tacking lace into the cuffs and collar of Calla's blue silk dress, and mending her own white opera-cloak—a relic of other days—for Calla's wear.

That party was another first experience to Calla. It was a large gathering where art and literature were more conspicuously represented than fashion and aristocracy. Still there were representatives of everything there; the party was not exclusive, and its various elements were mixed together into what was, on the whole, a very successful *mêlée*. There was beauty in the height of the mode, flounced, furbelowed, panniered, and polonaised; there was beauty in simple white cashmere made like the drapery of a Greek statue; there was mankind in spotless white ties and gloves, and mankind gloveless and with variegated ties, one even of a bright scarlet, but then he was a genius! There

was a crowd and a buzz of voices, and brilliant gas-light streaming from cut-glass chandeliers over pretty dresses and fair faces; and Calla sat in a corner where she had a seat, quite happy looking on, until one of the daughters of the house turned her attention to the young stranger with the bright, eager, dark eyes and happy, girlish face, and introduced her to two or three people, and drew her into her own select circle.

The select circle, of which Calla now found herself one, were all evidently on intimate terms with each other, and had common friends and mutual interests to talk of. They were, however, very kind and cordial to her, especially Miss Tregarne, the only unmarried daughter of the house, and Calla felt herself quite at home and at ease.

Miss Netta Tregarne was not in the least pretty, but she was striking and picturesque; a very pale girl, with abun-

dant hair of reddish gold—a girl without one good feature in her face, but looking as if she had stepped out of a picture, with her perfect dress, somewhat peculiar and quaint in its fashion, her tall, elegant figure, colourless white face, and Titian tinted hair.

"It's late in the season for a party, isn't it?" she observed, addressing the circle generally; "but we have been very fortunate in being able to gather all our friends together to-night. When are you going out of town, Louisa? What, not yet for a fortnight? And where are *you* going, Cecil? Up the Rhine? Oh, how delightful! Mr. Grafton is going there too—are not you, Harry? And where are *you* going, Miss Yorke?"

"Nowhere, I think. I've just come back," replied Calla, discovering that she too ought to have had a holiday tour in prospect.

"Is Jacky here to-night?" inquired one of the prospective Rhine tourists.

"Oh, yes. Haven't you seen her? She has caught a Hindoo. Our latest importation—a new acquisition to-night," said Miss Tregarne, glancing across the room at a tall turbaned Eastern bending over the chair of a very animated blonde of the "girl of the period" style.

"Who is he, Netta? Where did you pick him up? Foreigners, particularly dark ones, are very much in my line. You must introduce me," said a young lady, who had been addressed as Louisa.

"No, don't, Netta," interposed Mr. Harry Grafton, a young man remarkable for a wild and self-asserting crop of brown hair, whose luxuriance stood in sad need of a little pruning. "There's no getting a word out of Louisa if she's once introduced to a darkie. You recollect her and that Ashantee fellow? I say, tell us who's here to-night. Any swell strangers?"

"You know almost everybody—at least, everybody who *is* anybody. You don't need me to do guide-book to you."

"I wish somebody would do guide-book to me," put in Calla, catching Miss Tregarne's eye. "I don't know anybody."

Miss Tregarne hereupon turned her attention to Calla very kindly and graciously, and ran through a brief list, with commentaries, of the lions of the evening —half-grown lions most of them, who as yet roared softly—reflecting, as she did so, that if she had the superintendence of Calla's toilette she would attire her in something very different from the bright blue silk costume she wore, and "make something of her."

"That is my brother," observed Miss Tregarne, following Calla's eye. "Did you see his picture in the Academy? 'Evangeline?' It was skyed so that nobody could appreciate it. Did you notice it? No? Well, you must have noticed

the 'Polar Sunrise.' That was right on the line. That's the artist—Mr. Loftus—with my brother."

The two young artists indicated being apparently of a similar taste, were both at that moment devoted to a water-nymph looking girl in a shimmering green and white dress, with wild flowers in her long, loose golden hair.

"Who is that young lady?" asked Calla.

"Miss Grace Lee—one of our beauties; do you admire her?"

"Very much!" replied Calla sincerely.

"I must show you some of the other 'bright particular stars' of our constellation. My brother wants to make a series of Shakesperian studies. Miss Lee has already promised to give him a sitting for a study of Ophelia."

"She would make a first-rate Ophelia just as she is," said Calla, appreciatively.

"Look at Mrs. Foster—the lady in blue velvet; what a Cleopatra she would make!"

continued Miss Tregarne. "And then Miss Ashburnham, the one in white cashmere, with gold cords in her hair. Willy wanted to paint her as Desdemona! I tell him she is not at all the style!—too fine—too noble-looking—too statuesque! Any ordinary, fair, gentle, sweet face would do for Desdemona."

"That young lady is too splendid for it, certainly—too tall, too, isn't she?" said Calla.

"Yes. What she reminds one of now, is Tennyson's vision of Iphigenia—'a daughter of the gods,' you know, 'divinely tall.'"

"Who's this 'divine' being?" inquired Harry Grafton.

"Ah! Harry, you needn't ask! You rave about her, too, I know. I'm talking of Miss Ashburnham."

"Oh! I thought the 'divinely tall' beauty might be handsome Dick Dorvil! Ladies say he dances 'divinely,' I know.

If you're pointing out beauties to Miss Yorke, I hope you haven't slighted Dick Dorvil by omitting him?"

"Which is he?—no, don't tell me; let me guess," said Calla, quite interested, before Netta Tregarne, over whose white face a shade of pink had crept, could answer.

Calla surveyed the room, and whether by instinct or critical taste, picked out the specimen of masculine beauty alluded to. There he stood with his arm resting carelessly on the mantel-piece—'handsome Dick Dorvil,' 'Flower Dorvil,' as some call him from the scarlet flower that always blazes in his button-hole, 'Velvet coat,' as some strangers have dubbed him from the velvet coat he always wears. He is very handsome, certainly, with his golden curly hair; his dark blue eyes, and his athletic figure.

"A perfect type of the hero of the modern ladies' novel, the blond athlete

that we all know so well, isn't he?" observes Harry Grafton, between whom and Dick Dorvil there exists instinctive rivalry, though they have never yet combated in any lists.

Further comments upon the gentleman's appearance are stopped by his making his way up to join the group with another gentleman, whom Netta Tregarne, utterly ignoring Mr. Dorvil, addresses familiarly.

"Well, Jack, have you got your revised proofs in yet?"

"Did you read 'Lucilla Vane,' Miss Yorke?" inquires her friendly hostess, presently, turning to the young stranger in the camp.

"Yes."

"Mr. Lisburne is the author," indicating one of the latest additions to the group, "he has another book just ready; shall I introduce you?"

"Yes, please," replies Calla, simply, and gratified. The introduction is performed,

and Miss Tregarne, leaving Mr. Lisburne and Miss Yorke to entertain each other, melts slowly away out of the group in company with Mr. Dorvil.

Mr. Lisburne takes it for granted that Calla has read all the books published by their "circle," and seen and admired all their pictures. She is obliged to shut up a few avenues of conversation by acknowledging that of many of these productions she is ignorant. Nevertheless, they "get on" very well together. Calla is bright and frank and refreshingly simple and girlish; and she smoothes the author's plumes by inquiring with sincere interest about his forthcoming book, and talking of "Lucilla Vane" as of a real living acquaintance.

"Slater and Paywell published your book, did they not?" she adds with renewed interest as she recollects the fact, "and they are going to publish a book by a friend of ours, Mr. Felix Grey; have you heard of him?"

"Grey? Ah yes, I remember; Australian fellow, isn't he? Slater thinks well of him. His first book, is it not?"

"Yes; but he has written articles and reviews in newspapers before," replies Calla eagerly, anxious to give her friend his full due.

The information does not, however, go far towards raising Mr. Grey in the estimation of Mr. Lisburne, who since he has taken to publishing three volumes, rather looks down on journalism; and besides, having met with hostile criticism, regards all reviewers and critics, with one or two personal exceptions, as natural enemies.

He found in Calla such a congenial spirit, that before they parted he had confided to her his grievances on that score, and enlisted her sympathies on his own side as a present, and on that of her friend Felix as probably a future, sufferer from the slings and arrows of criticism.

Calla was delighted with her evening as

a child with a new toy. She talked on as if the full flow of chatter would never ebb again, about Miss Tregarne's charms and kindness, the people, the conversation, the music, the dresses. The feminine instincts had sprung forth full panoplied as Minerva at last, and she went into raptures about Mrs. Foster's blue velvet, and oh, Miss Lee's *lovely* green and white tulle! "Just the dress in which you would fancy Undine floating about the gardens in her happy days."

"Well, you shall have one like it, my little girl; I mean to have my daughter as well dressed as any of them," said her father good-naturedly.

"Auntie dear, this is the most eventful Summer of my life!" cried Calla enthusiastically. "A new world seems to be opening before me. I feel that I'm standing at the gates of a new path! New experiences, new pleasures, new ideas. This year makes mine a new life!"

"Will you forget old friends in new ones, I wonder?" said Mrs. King thoughtfully. "You are just at the age to do so."

"Forget! What, Felix and Isabel, you mean?" exclaimed Calla confidently. "Forget *them?* Never!"

But she was too young yet for anyone to hazard a prediction either that she "did protest too much," or that she would be loyal to those early loves which so often drop off like the outer petals whose only use has been to protect and prepare the bud from which they must fall as soon as it blossoms.

Constant, or changeful? what eyes were far-seeing enough then to tell which this girl would prove? and who shall say which in this world's ocean endangers most—the Charybdis, Fickleness or the Scylla, Faith?

## CHAPTER VI.

"SO MERE A WOMAN IN HER WAYS."

THREE years have passed since what seemed to her so new a life had dawned on Calla Yorke, and that Summer had shone upon her which had seemed the most eventful of all the seasons of her bright youth, whose deepest longings were so easy of fulfilment, whose highest aspirations so easy to attain.

The new life is an old one now, and Summers equally happy, if with less of the dazzle of novelty in their brightness, have passed over her head, and ripened, touch by touch, her girlish charms, till now she is a graceful woman instead of a half-developed, overgrown slip of a girl. And still Tom Yorke stays on in London for at least

the best part of every year; still when in town he resides in furnished apartments, too inherent a Bohemian to take a house; still wherever he goes his daughter always —and his sister-in-law generally—go with him; still Calla delights, as vividly as in that first shining season, in society—not society of a fashionable kind, for that has very little to say to the Yorkes or the Yorkes to it—but in the society of that borderland of Bohemia called respectable, but which overlaps the frontiers of Bohemia still. Of this happy land whose delights are only realised by its natives, Calla is counted as one of the favourite princesses now. And a princess of respectable Bohemia finds her crown no burden, and is delightfully free from the cares and duties of royalty elsewhere.

It was Netta Tregarne who first "discovered" Calla Yorke, drew her out, and took her in hand, called the attention of others to the promise of great loveliness in

that girlish face and figure, frankly volunteered hints on her toilette, and finally had the satisfaction of seeing her *protégée* attain to a conspicuous place in the gallery of beauties adored by "the clique."

Mr. Yorke and Mrs. King are proud to see "the child" so popular, and leave her free in perfect faith to follow her way as she lists. Calla has the prudence of instinct, if not of reflection, and a clear-sightedness and penetration that develop as her intellect matures. Added to this, she is straightforward even to want of tact, as pure-hearted as she is truthful; and so the trust in her is safely placed. Mrs. King notes with pleasure that she shows no signs of getting "spoilt," though she has developed just vanity enough to make her array herself now to the best advantage. This is a change all for the better. A woman altogether without vanity is like a dinner altogether without salt.

Closely united as Calla has become with

the clique she loves in London, the new friends have never superseded the old. She has never been unfaithful to the pact of friendship made at La Basse-Rive; no friends are dearer to her than—nay, none so dear as—the Darrells; she has no companion so beloved as Isabel; and Felix is her favourite friend, hero, and brother. During these three years the Yorkes have only paid two visits to the Château de la Basse-Rive; but they have seen a great deal of Felix Grey, for he has been in England most of the time, until a few months ago he crossed the Atlantic on a business commission to Chicago, whence he is now, in this June, daily expected back. Calla never leaves home for an hour without entrusting a special message to the servant, "in case Mr. Grey should call." She is quite as fond of Felix as ever, and thinks there is nobody like him for goodness and kindness and cleverness. Although she moves in a circle of which all the male

element is more or less attractive, no aesthetic artist, or picturesque author, or Byronic poet, ever succeeds in ousting Felix Grey from his throne. She flirts in a shallow, girlish way with other men; *he* is the friend she trusts and loves. She has a whole pocket-book full of newspaper cuttings, reviews of Mr. Grey's books, or articles by that promising young man, or personal items from the "Varieties" columns of such thrilling interest as, "We understand that Mr. Felix Grey has a new work in the press," or, "Mr. Felix Grey will sail for Europe shortly." Calla is harmlessly proud of these marks of distinction enjoyed by Felix, and says frankly she really believes she takes more interest in him than his own sister—which is possibly true.

One day when Felix Grey does return to England and call at the Yorkes, he finds Calla is not at home. She has gone to the Tregarnes' studio for a sitting, as

Will Tregarne is taking her portrait. It is the first time Calla has sat for her portrait to an artist, though she has been photographed several times by the wish of her proud father. The operation of being photographed she regards in much the same light as a visit to the dentist's; but "sitting" for a life-size half-length she enjoys. The very atmosphere of Tregarne's studio is death to dulness; formality flees before it, and ceremony is exiled from its otherwise hospitable walls. If Calla is ever left to wait awhile alone there, she is at home aud happy—in spite of a hideous lay-figure with battered and defaced features which might startle a nervous visitor.

Two skulls upon a shelf grin over a bevy of lovely female heads in crayons beneath, with a grim suggestiveness. A large rocking-horse might seem out of place, if *here* anything could seem out of place, and if one did not recollect that

Will's last picture but one was a domestic tableau, scene laid in the nursery. Nothing, however, whether ornamental, useful, or the reverse of either, but seems in its fitting place here; there is a stuffed blue macaw, a carriage-wheel, a clothes-horse, a broken boat, a large rock of white coral, and several suits of old armour, which look unfamiliar with the touch of brush or duster.

The floor is not carpeted; but fur rugs and skins of the spotted leopard, serve alike as foot-warmers and useful properties. Adjoining the studio proper, and communicating with it by a door, is a room which bears more resemblance to an ordinary sitting-room, possessing carpets, tables, and chairs, and a window instead of a skylight, but whose walls are decorated with half-finished studies and unframed sketches, and which contains two easels, and a banished lay-figure (if exiled on account of its ugliness, certainly its com-

panion in the studio should follow it into exile).

In the studio Will Tregarne reigns supreme; the adjoining room is frequently lent to a friend as a studio, or occupied by anybody staying in the house. Netta paints there often; and there on this day Mr. Loftus is working at his picture. Netta has been playing propriety to Calla and Will in the studio, but has retired for a few moments' chat with Loftus, and with Miss "Jacky" Hunter who has just called.

Calla occupies a great easy-chair upholstered in sombre green velvet. That sombre green background may be recognised in more than one of the portraits, finished or unfinished, that adorn the room. The fact that it is the most comfortable seat there may be a cause that has something to do with this effect.

Calla has certainly improved wonderfully in beauty during these three years—or it may be that she is less careless of her ap-

pearance, and sets herself off to more advantage now that she has left the awkward transition age behind. Her white dress is as simple as it can be, but it fits and flows faultlessly; and the narrow velvet round her neck, the spray of fuchsia drooping from her brooch, the corresponding flower in her hair, all, even to the frills at her wrists, are arranged with perfect taste. The neglected hair that used to be pushed "anywhere, anywhere out of the way" into a net, is wound round in rich loose graceful coils. It is a change from the careless child of three years ago certainly; but still Calla is not altered a whit, only matured from bud to flower.

"I am getting rather tired of gazing at that skull," she observes meekly, for that cheerful object is the focus on which she is directed to fix her eyes steadily.

"Wait one minute, and then you shall have a rest. You have been very good and patient. Just let me get this curve of

the eyebrow right. There! Now, Miss Yorke, wink, blink, move, stretch your arms, only don't knock your flowers awry."

Calla avails herself instantly of the permission. She draws herself erect, and releases her hands from the clasp in which they have begun to feel quite stiff; she tosses back her head and glances round at everything in the room except the skull on which her regards have for the last hour been fixed.

"I believe you contrive a double debt to pay, by the focus you have selected for me to stare at," she observes. "You paint my portrait, and you inculcate a moral lesson. 'Take me to my lady's chamber, and tell her to this favour she must come at last!'" she quotes, looking the incarnation of youth and health, and quite unconsciously leaning on the arm of the chair in an attitude more careless and far more graceful than that in which she is being immortalised.

Will Tregarne ignores the remark she utters in his instant appreciation of the turn of her head as she speaks and smiles.

"That's a beautiful pose, Miss Yorke," he exclaims enthusiastically, "keep it a minute, do! Now, if we could seize *that*, I'd begin a smaller sketch in chalks directly. I want a crayon sketch of you. If you'll kindly keep just as you are for a minute, I'll call Loftus in. I want his opinion, I think it's just the thing."

Will Tregarne opens the doors and disappears into the adjoining room, where now there are several voices, some strange, some familiar. Loftus is summoned, but evidently not Loftus alone; the door is flung wider open, and Loftus and Netta and several others enter the studio where Calla Yorke is dutifully preserving the admired pose.

Two of those who enter are bright-eyed Miss Jacky Hunter in a miraculous hat and feathers, and Dick Dorvil, looking, as

usual, a perfect bit of colouring, with the red flower in the breast of his brown velvet coat, and his golden hair and much admired complexion. Another is a young man in a grey shooting-jacket, in whose somewhat too slightly built figure and pale, plain face there is nothing striking or attractive to a stranger's eye, but whose entrance is a delightful surprise to Calla; for it is Felix Grey.

The "beautiful pose" lasts for just one second as her eyes fix on him in glad recognition. Then it is lost for ever (unless chance aid them to find it again), as she springs up and holds out an eager hand of welcome.

"Is it really you? Why, how did you come? When did you come?" she inquires instantly. For Calla is seldom contented to accept the fact that a thing *is*; she always desires to know how it came to be so.

"I knew you were here. I called at your place first, of course," Felix replies,

and the visitors "make a note of" this; but they look discreetly aside, and pretend not to have heard, indeed, they profess an unusual absorption in the sketches on the walls. Calla, however, rejoins with a prompt frankness that disarms suspicion and brings their discreet gaze back from the wall ornaments.

"Yes, I should think you *had* called at our place first. You would get into a kettle of hot water if you called on anyone else before us."

Then Miss Hunter inquires what kind of a voyage Mr. Grey has had, and does not wait to be answered, but catching sight of Calla's portrait, plunges headlong into a fit of admiration. Then everybody forms in a circle round the portrait, to criticise or admire; and Felix inspects both it and its original narrowly and intently before he expresses any approbation.

The visitors all lounge about the studio, and, being intimates and *habitués*, pull

portfolios out of dusty corners, and turn sketches leaning with their faces to the wall, round to the light. The time slips away, and there is no further "sitting" that day. But Calla is going to stay to dinner, and Felix Grey takes his *congé*, not without a little secret reluctance, leaving Calla deep in the interpretation of an allegorical sketch, wherein a number of mythical figures appear to be whirling in chaos, which has a deep and subtle meaning, admirably hidden from the world in general. Looking back from the studio door, Felix carries away the picture of Calla and Tregarne holding up this work of art between them, of Dorvil pointing out its beauties with the wrong end of a paint-brush, and of Calla's face turned away from the study of the allegory with a parting smile for him as he glanced back.

Felix thought to himself that day, "How splendid Calla is looking! She is a woman now. I wonder how long these *tête-à-tête*

sittings last?" And thinking of those *tête-à-tête* sittings, he wished he had found Calla at home. After nearly six months' absence he wanted a quiet talk with his little friend—not to be one of "two or three fellows hanging around talking art small-talk."

He lost no time in paying another visit to the rooms where the Yorkes were now residing, and this time found Calla at home alone. Mrs. King and Mr. Yorke were out on business bent.

"Well now, Calla, tell me all you have been doing with yourself these six months?" Felix said, settling himself comfortably in an arm-chair and looking approvingly round the room and at her as she sat with some light needlework in her hand, fresh, smiling, and bright as morning. "It seems quite jolly and homely to be here with you again," he added, with placid enjoyment.

"Yes, isn't it?" she agreed. "I missed

you very much the first three months; and then I began to comfort myself. Just as I had got quite reconciled to your absence, you naturally come back," she remarked, with a gay smile.

"I had better have stayed longer, perhaps, if all my friends are as flatteringly indifferent," he said, smiling too.

"*I* am certainly the most indifferent, and the most unfriendly, and the coldest, and most inconstant of all your host of friends, am I not?" she said, with the prettiest and the sweetest of her playful glances. "Now, Felix, tell me what have you been doing? Have you been writing? and haven't you got anything to show me?"

"You're a witch, Calla! You've looked through my coat into my pocket and seen my manuscript. Yes, I'm trying something in a new line. Worked at it a good deal on the voyage—when it wasn't too shaky to hold a pencil and note-book. I've brought the first act to show you." He

pulled a packet of MSS. out of his breast-pocket.

"*Act!* What, a play? Blank Verse! Now, Felix, never a tragedy?" exclaimed Calla, reproachfully.

"I don't know exactly what it is," he replied, rumpling up his brown hair perplexedly. "It's in five acts; but it's going to end happily."

"Then it's a comedy," she said decidedly.

"It's *not!*" he rejoined, rather indignantly. "There are two murders in it!"

"Two! Why, you're nearly as bad as the 'Old Dramatists,' who never—by the little I know of them—seem to have been content unless they left the stage strewn with corpses."

"*My* people don't both die in the same scene; and another thing I can promise you—they don't 'die standing.' Stage personages are very like that King of France—which was he, by-the-by?—in

that respect. They almost invariably die erect, leaning against a column, or very stiffly supported on somebody's arm. It's a curious thing that they don't fall; and nobody has the humanity to lay them down to die quietly. One of mine dies in a cave——"

"And the other on a couch, I suppose?"

"Exactly so. How did you guess?"

"Instinct," laughed Calla. "Well, now, I'll tell you what I've been doing," she added presently. "You know I had a story—it was only a fairy story—in the *Children's Comfort?*"

"Oh, yes, I know. I want to see it."

"But you're not a child—and it was only for children. Well, but I've done something more than that. It's a secret,"—drawing her chair a little nearer confidentially and mysteriously. "I've always, you know, been beginning things, and I've finished a story at last. It's in eight chapters, and I've made my first venture

all by myself. I walked off quietly one day, and took it to Slater and Paywell's Magazine. Auntie knew Mr. Paywell, and so I didn't feel quite strange. But oh, it was such a delicious novelty to me! The office looked very dingy and dusty, and there was only one rickety wooden stool, and I sat on that, and felt rather as if I were going to the dentist's." (By Calla's sparkling eyes and confidingly enthusiastic tone of voice one would be bound to believe that the situation she described was just within the gates of Paradise!) "And I sent in my little note, and presently a very benevolent elderly gentleman appeared. I don't know how I introduced myself, or how I got into the Presence Chamber; but the Presence Chamber was very comfortable indeed——"

"They always are," said Felix, parenthetically.

"Arm-chairs, and a beautiful *escritoire* with pigeon-holes," continued Calla. "And

the old gentleman was quite benignant and paternal, and I left my precious little brown-paper parcel; and as I came out, I felt quite pleased that the clerks should see I had left it behind. I should have felt so humiliated if they had seen me carry it out again. Luckily it was so small I could have hidden it under my cloak."

"I wish everybody could enjoy their first venture as much as you seem to have done!" said Felix, with a half amused, half tender look in his thoughtful brown eyes. "Well, and what's the upshot of it? Are you accepted?"

"I don't know. It's nearly three weeks ago, and I haven't heard," she replied, rather ruefully.

"Oh, that's nothing," he rejoined cheerfully, he having long got past the stage when three weeks' waiting seems an eternity.

Then Mrs. King came in, and was very glad to see Felix, who was a favourite of hers. They made him stay to dinner, and

had a merry evening. Mr. Yorke was in the gayest of his buoyant spirits; he and Felix were very good friends, indeed it was difficult to dislike Felix Grey, and it was impossible to dislike Mr. Yorke, even to those whom his reckless carelessness most annoyed or grieved. Two natures more opposite than these two men's could not have been found, yet the one never judged severely of the other's thoughtless aimlessness, nor did the other ever sneer or scoff at the slow, quiet, earnest nature of the first. It may be because, opposite as night and day though their natures were, Pharisaical harshness was equally far from both; their tolerant charity, though springing from different sources—in the one from easy, thoughtless good-nature, and in the other from breadth and freedom of thought—was the one quality they possessed in common.

They talked a great deal about business, which Calla did not understand much

about nor trouble herself to listen to; there seemed to be "a good deal of America in the business," she thought. She gathered that there was a possibility of her father's finding it necessary to "go over," and that Felix Grey did not seem quite sure about the "safety" of something which was evidently not his own business, but Mr. Yorke's. Mr. Yorke would always listen with most friendly readiness to anything Felix Grey had to say, and was "delighted to receive" any suggestion of his. But Tom Yorke invariably listened to advice, and never was known to take it. Calla never troubled her head by thinking about her father's affairs—past, present, or future. She knew him very well; she loved him even better than she knew him, and, with something of his carelessness, inherited, and softened in her to a buoyant trustfulness, she had the same kind of faith in him that he had in "lucky chances."

It was a different kind of faith from that she held in Felix; one was a superstition that the helmless vessel would drift into port, the other was a confidence that the captain would do his duty; and neither faith could have been shaken in Calla's heart without pouring into her fresh, sweet, trustful nature a drop of bitterness never to be expunged. There is nothing, after all, like the first faith, the first hope, the first illusion; the second fruits may look as fair, and taste as sweet, but the first fresh fragrance and the first pure bloom come back no more.

The days glided on, and meetings between the Yorkes and Felix Grey were, of course, frequent. Besides his morning visits to them, which were not rare, they met at parties, at theatres, at kettle-drums, at those quiet "evenings at home" where you may chance to find only the host and hostess and their family, or may meet half the world—that is to say, half the "world"

of the circle you frequent—a larger or lesser, higher or lower world, as the case may be.

Each circle is fortunately, as a rule, sufficiently well satisfied with its own world not to desire a flight to another sphere. I suppose the worms on each and every cabbage-leaf are equally confident that theirs is the greenest and most succulent! Intellect looks down on Wealth; Wealth rustles her satin skirts past Intellect with self-contented superiority; Fashion smiles scornfully down on them both from her charmed height; Bohemia laughs in the ceremoniously composed face of Conventionalism; while Conventionalism averts its shocked countenance from Bohemia. "So runs the world away!" and so we follow our different roads to the goal where all shall meet and harmonise, and leave "circles" and "cliques" behind, in the world to which they belong, and which surely would be a very poor tame world

without them! as dead-level and monotonous as a treeless plain unrelieved by hill or valley.

The Graftons' "Sunday evenings" were an old institution, and it was perhaps to their long standing and old associations that they owed a great part of their charm. Such gatherings, like brown beurré pears, take a good deal of time to mellow and ripen to their full perfection. The Graftons' gatherings were never very large, for although the list of their friends increased, their rooms were not elastic. One evening in July those rooms were about as full as was endurable on a still and sultry night, when the gas-light felt oppressive, and all the ladies were fanning themselves, and all the gentlemen getting near open doors and windows. The Graftons' drawing-room

> "had gathered then
> Its beauty and its chivalry,"

in the proportion of about five of the

chivalrous sex to one of the beautiful, it happened to be (as it happens more often in Bohemia than in Belgravia) Felix Grey was one of the chivalry, and Calla Yorke was one of the beauty, one of the brightest stars in the small constellation too. For amongst the fair minority only half were young, and of that half only two had a clear claim to beauty. Be it observed, for the credit of the good looks of the circle, that this night the total of ladies young and single only reached to four, the remainder consisting of two genial matrons, who had accompanied their lords, and two literary widows neither young nor fair.

Netta Tregarne was there, faultlessly draped in soft folds of purest white, high to the throat and close to the wrists; and there was a strong-minded looking young lady, with spectacles and a black serge walking dress, stout walking shoes, and short-cropped curly hair; and Miss Vanessa Vavasour, a young actress, popular and

pretty—popular, her depreciators said, on account of her prettiness—who shared with Calla the honours of youth and beauty. The two were well contrasted, Calla in her fresh morning of youth, with courage and purity manifest in every look of her frank dark eyes, and Vanessa Vavasour, with her brilliant blonde colouring and witching glance of drooping almond-shaped blue eyes, a hot-house trained flower beside the wild white rose of the lanes.

There was handsome Dick Dorvil; there was a sabre-scarred American colonel, the "hero of a hundred fights;" there was Mr. Treves, of Clarence Street celebrity, who had become by this time known to all friends of the Yorkes, and went where they went, and was rather a favourite of Calla's for the sake of "Auld Lang Syne," and who considered himself an artist now, and let his light hair grow very long and turned down his collar loosely; and there was a fair, fat, florid gentleman concerning

whom Calla whispered confidentially to Felix Grey—

"Do you see that nice young man in the spectacles? He edits the *Children's Comfort*, and I am going over to make myself agreeable to him."

"I should have thought you soared above the *Children's Comfort* now?"

"Not a bit! I got four pounds ten for my story. You can't imagine my delight when my first cheque arrived. And I don't think it is at all 'best to be off with the old love before you are on with the new'—not in literature, at least. I mean to be very faithful to the *Children's Comfort*, until I've got my footing safe elsewhere," laughed Calla.

"Mercenary and worldly child!" said Felix; "I suppose if Slater and Paywell's 'first reader' should enter now, you'd forsake that 'nice young man in spectacles' on the spot?"

"That would be casting off the 'old

love' rather too suddenly, wouldn't it?" she responded. As they stood confidentially, laughing and talking low, the unconscious object of their remarks recognising Calla for the first time bowed and made his way towards her, while Mrs. Grafton came up to introduce Felix Grey to Miss Vavasour. Felix and Calla looked at each other and smiled as they drifted apart, and they came together no more until the end of the evening.

Calla and her editor get on so well, and she is so successful in her task of being agreeable, that though they get wedged in behind a table between the barriers of stout Mrs. Green on one side, and a pair of tall young men absorbed in argument on the other, they do not find their imprisonment in the least irksome. Still Calla is not too absorbed to lose sight altogether of Felix; she notices how long and how attentively he and Vanessa Vavasour are talking; her eyes follow them

when they drift together out of the crowd and into a cosy window recess at the other side of the room, and catch glimpses again and again of Vanessa seated leaning back gracefully, and of Felix bending over her and fanning her with her own mother-of-pearl fan.

When refreshments are brought in, there is a general breaking up of the separate groups and concentration on that side of the folding-doors where the wine and biscuits and ham sandwiches form a focus of attraction. Still Felix and Vanessa Vavasour are laughing and talking together, and Calla hears her saying trustingly,

"*Of course* you are coming to see me in *The Hunchback* next week? I shall count on seeing you." And Netta, passing, whispers to Calla with a glance at Vanessa, whom she does not like, "Another victim!"

Mr. Goodchild is still by Calla's side,

mixing her a glass of wine and water; Treves is at her other hand with his own hands full of offerings—plates of sandwiches and cake. She is enjoying herself very much—but she wishes Felix were in Treves's place. The gentlemen are all beginning to smoke now; the ladies have all protested they don't mind it in the least, and Vanessa Vavasour is confiding to Felix Grey in a charmingly soft and coquettish whisper, something in which a word like "cigarette" is just audible. Some people are generously offering cigar-cases round; some pull out pipes, republican clays, or aristocratic and beautifully coloured meerschaums.

Everybody sits down and begins to look very happy and peaceful; a faint haze of graceful curls of vapour begins to dim the atmosphere and mellow the too brilliant gas-light; Harry Grafton and Jack Lisburne are exchanging confidences over a pocket-book in a retired corner; Dick

Dorvil is leading a discussion upon the censorship of the drama; Miss Vavasour has sunk down on a footstool, settling her silken drapery gracefully round her and devoting her transferred attention to Mr. Goodchild; and Felix takes up his place by Calla's side again. She welcomes him with a smile that is frankly glad and only ever so little coquettish.

"It is quite evident you are writing a play! I should have guessed it if you hadn't told me. You mean business, I see. She'll make a lovely Ermengilda, won't she?" are Calla's first words, gaily whispered, with a half glance in the direction of Miss Vavasour.

"Not in the least Ermengilda," he replies earnestly, taking the remark *au sérieux*. "I daresay she could look it, and dress it; she could *look* anything; but she couldn't *play* it," continues Felix, who possibly is singular enough to have an

exaggerated idea of the magnificence of his heroine's character.

"She could dress it, I daresay! But *I* don't think she could *look* it," observes Calla, with an air of impartial criticism.

"Features not quite classic enough, perhaps," assents Felix, with a glance at Calla's broad fair brow and regular profile. "I haven't been able to get near *you* all the evening," he continues, as if complaining of a just grievance.

"Did you ever try?" she asks, with a mischievous smile.

"Well, perhaps not," he laughingly admits; "but I should have tried if you hadn't been so heart-and-soul absorbed with that fellow all the time. I saw there was no room for me; and I don't like going shares."

"One *must* be agreeable to one's editor, mustn't one?" she responds, with a brief bright look from under her long dark lashes, and a perceptible but unaccount-

able deepening of the colour on her cheek. Why should she blush at anything Felix Grey may say? They are such old friends! and this is the first time the rose has glowed on her face because his eyes were fixed on it.

"What are you thinking about so solemnly, Felix?" she asks, half playfully, half curiously.

If Felix had answered the very truth, he might have said, "Wondering whether you were blushing about that fellow or not!" He replied something very close to the truth, in fact it was true, though not the whole truth, in replying,

"Thinking how changed you are, since first I knew you—since the day I found you sitting reading Shakespeare on the leads!" he added, with a smile.

"In an old dusty brown dress not many degrees removed from rags and tatters," she rejoined, "which I hadn't even the grace to be ashamed of! I have altered

in one thing certainly. I shouldn't deem myself fit for the reception of visitors in such a costume now. But have I really changed much ?"

"I think you have."

"For the worse, I suppose?"

"You know better than that, Calla; don't fish for compliments !"

"It would be no use to fish for them from *you* ; you never pay me any !"

"No, I don't think I ever did," Felix admitted meditatively. "We are too old friends for compliments, aren't we, Calla ? And you get enough of them elsewhere ?" He looked at her interrogatively, waited a moment for an answer, and then added, "don't you ?"

A gleam of mischief sparkled in her eye as she replied demurely,

"Oh yes, plenty !"

Felix tried to look pleased, but somehow failed. Calla perceived one of her artistic admirers steering his way across

the room towards her, and knew that her *tête-à-tête* with Felix would speedily be broken up.

"Whatever else I may have altered in," she said, with a sudden change of tone, lowering her voice and looking up at him with her old frank sweetness, "I have never changed in one thing; I am always the same to my old friends—to *you*."

## CHAPTER VII.

"THROUGH ALL TURNS OF FATE THAT FACE TO FOLLOW."

A LONDON back-garden is not the most pleasant lounging place in the world, especially when it is only about fifteen feet square, and overlooked by all the back-windows of the entire length of two streets. But the Yorkes have a wonderful faculty of making themselves comfortable under any circumstances, and utilising the most unpromising material for their pleasures. They often like to spend these warm Summer evenings in the open air without taking the trouble to dress and walk as far as the park, and by stepping out of a glass door on the ground floor of their

present abode they can indulge in all the enjoyment afforded by fresh air, only a trifle smoked, sunshine and sunset, fifteen square feet of gravelled land, three lilac bushes, a lime-tree, and about as much green turf as you would put in a skylark's cage. With this attainable luxury at their own doors, they frequently content themselves, and loiter there placidly as if never to wander more.

There they are sitting, Felix, Calla, and Mr. Yorke, all three sublimely indifferent to the numberless back-windows, from garret to basement, that command their position, and the countless critical eyes that may or may not be bent upon them from behind those fluttering white curtains or discreetly-closed Venetian blinds. There is a young woman in the attic next door but one who has thrust herself half out of the window and knocked her coquettish cap awry in her interest in watching them; there is a parrot next door, whose cage is

hung out to catch the warmth of sunset, and who is curtseying up and down in his ring with his head cocked on one side and his yellow-circled eyes fixed on them as he repeats over and over again, "Polly sees you." Mrs. King is indoors, not delighting in the publicity of the so-called "garden," and preferring the comfortable seclusion of her easy-chair.

Perhaps in reality three lilac bushes cast shadow enough for three people to enjoy; the drooping lime leaves and the little square of turf smell fresh and sweet; and the floating streaks of sunset cloud could not have been more royally dyed in gold and purple if they had been viewed from solitary hill-top, or sea-shore, or grassy valley, instead of from a little strip of cockney garden.

The trio have brought out chairs and a little table; Calla is reading by the fast-fading daylight—reading some of her aunt's proof-sheets, playing at being very

busy revising them, nibbling the end of a pencil abstractedly, and now and then with a little air of importance making a hieroglyphical mark or two on the margin. Felix and Mr. Yorke are talking as usual.

Felix Grey belongs to the numerous and ever-increasing class of young men with theories. He has theories political, theories social, theories religious. Some of them are heterodox enough, but he is not one of those theorists who are given to startling their friends; his friends, indeed, are seldom surprised or taken aback by his doctrines, simply because there is a sort of transparent singleness and tenacity about him that renders the tone of his mind easy to learn, so that those who know him well are able, as a rule, to divine what manner of view he will be likely to take of any given subject.

This evening he and Tom Yorke have been holding forth alternately upon Darwinism, natural selection, the law of pri-

mogeniture, parental authority, and marriage, taking characteristically opposite views on most of these subjects. Felix is very strong on the duty of celibacy in those families afflicted by any hereditary malady. It is a pet theory of his; he never waxes warm, but he waxes decidedly emphatic, in his assertion that—

"A man has no business to marry and entail any mental or physical suffering on posterity. We owe a duty to the future as well as to the past."

"Ah, it's easy to lay down the law as to what human nature *ought* to do, my dear boy," says Tom Yorke—"not so easy to drive it into the path it ought to tread."

"Not easy, perhaps. But difficulties were made to be mastered."

"There are some difficulties you can clear easily enough in theory that you can't jump over in practice. Perhaps it is well that our principles should be a little above us. I'm very sure there are some

standards that we keep merely as a fine show—and they do look superb; but poor human nature couldn't strain up to their level if it would, and probably wouldn't if it could."

"When we wouldn't if we could, it's well enough. That's straightforward. There's no paltering with a double sense in that. But to my mind there's no more contemptible cowardice in the world," rejoins Felix, who uses strong language sometimes, "than that common one which lets a wide gulf gape between the principle and the act—keeps the will and the word on one side, and leaves the deed on the other."

"Ah, Felix, my boy," says Mr. Yorke sentimentally, watching a slow curl of smoke float up from his cigar, "when the depths of human affections and passions make up the breadth of the gulf—well, it takes something more than mortal to

bridge it over, and bring the word and the deed together."

"I can't see it," responds Felix. "When there's a contest between love and strong resolve in any human heart, if love gets the better, it does not seem to me to prove so much the strength of the feeling as the weakness of the will. That weakness, of course, seeks its own excuse by pleading the other's strength. But I don't see how a strong feeling can grow from a weak nature, or how it is possible that from a strong and self-contained nature there can develop any one feeling so strong itself as to overbalance and conquer the very forces and power from which it drew its own. Strong love, strong will; but loves come and go, and will endures."

Calla lays down her pencil, which has been idle for some minutes, and strikes in, in her light, clear tone—

"I don't mean to flatter your argument,

Felix, but it strikes me—as I read somewhere—that

'Thou lovest not who reasonest so well!'"

"Aha, I think she's got you there!" says the fond father. "Comes in very pat, that, eh? *Thou lovest not!*"

"Well, perhaps I am not an affectionate nature," Felix pleads guilty, smiling.

"Ah, come, Master Felix," said Tom Yorke jocularly, with a knowing air. "I should like to be your father-confessor. It would be interesting to know the where, when, and how of every fellow's first love," he continues. "Whatever else one forgets, one never forgets that. When I was ten years old, I was in love with a little girl who used to sit in the next pew at church."

"That was beginning early, papa, wasn't it?" says Calla.

"And I was faithful for three years," he responds. "When I was thirteen I fell down fathoms and fathoms deeper in love

with a young lady at a pastrycook's. I'm afraid she must have been nearer thirty than twenty, looking back at her with sober, disenchanted eyes. But, good heavens! to me she was Venus and all the sirens rolled into one. The bills I ran up for tarts! I soon ran through my ready money. I wonder I didn't ruin my constitution with that tough pastry, that used to seem to me to be flavoured with nectar."

"Was *your* first love anything in the sweetstuff line, Felix?" inquires Calla, gaily; "there seems a certain appropriateness in such a choice!"

"There does," Felix agrees. "I wonder if the association of jam and peppermint-rock with the presiding genius of the counter has anything to do with the boys' prevalent tendency to select her as the object of their adoration? It might be convenient, if the lady were willing, to accept love instead of money, which she generally isn't!"

But he does not answer Calla's question; he volunteers no responsive confidence whatever about his loves, whether first, second, or third. His silence on the point piques and tantalises Calla, she does not know why. A sense of irritating curiosity stings her; she feels an involuntary and unreasonable antagonism towards unknown possible loves of Felix's. She is vexed that their conversation is interrupted here by Mrs. King's calling her.

"Calla dear, come in; I want you a minute."

"What's up, auntie? Nothing wrong, is there?" says Calla, seeing that Mrs. King has a letter in her hand.

"Nothing that need trouble you, dear. But I am afraid I shall have to go to Scotland. Alice is much worse. You see what her husband writes at her dictation," and she handed the letter to Calla.

"Alice" was Calla's other aunt, Mrs. King's sister, who had shared with her the

care of Tom Yorke's child when he first left England, until some few years ago she had married late in life, and gone to settle in the north of Scotland. She had been ailing for some time, and was now so seriously ill that—although not believed to be in actual danger—she entreated her sister to come and care for her and attend to her house during her illness, from which the doctors held out no hope of recovery under several months. She was lonely and distressed, and called on her sister for the help which Mrs. King, of course, was glad to be able to give, although she was sorry to leave Calla, and Calla was equally grieved at having to part with her aunt. Still as the girl was now no longer dependent solely on her, but safe and happy in her father's care, Mrs. King had no reason to withhold her from the duty of complying with her sister's request.

"And it is only for a few months, dear child," she said. "Directly Alice is better

I shall either return to you, or, perhaps, when the most anxious time of her illness is over, you might come up to Scotland and stay with us. So you see it is not for long we have to say good-bye."

And with this parting assurance on her lips, Mrs. King kissed Calla and took her place in the railway-carriage, and the "Flying Scotchman" snorted and shrieked and tore off on its nightly journey, and arrived safely at its destination without the smallest disaster—a consummation which, if railway accidents continue in their present ratio, will soon come to be a fact worth chronicling.

It is true that

> "Sorrows come not single spies
> But in battalions."

It is sometimes equally true of circumstances that do not come under the category of sorrows. Just as History repeats itself, and the same action takes place age

after age on a different field, so in private families sometimes it is curious to note how incidents happen in sequence. It is often observed plaintively "how difficult it is to get out of mourning when once you are in it!" And not only deaths, but such minor calamities as partings, journeys, engagements, and marriages often seem suddenly to become epidemic.

Thus it happened that a very few days after Mrs. King's northward migration, Mr. Yorke came home one afternoon with an air of absorption and of as much excitement as was consistent with his usual *sans-souci*, and finding Calla seated quietly at work, flung himself into a chair, smiling, and commenced the conversation by a simple observation that nevertheless caused Calla's eyes to open in surprised attention.

"I want a talk with you, Calla."

She pushed away her needlework across

the table, and turned to him and crossed her hands in her lap, alertly, brightly, intently ready to listen.

"Of course I've always been going back to America *some day*," began Tom Yorke. "And now I think that *some day* has come. I'm going back on a commission that I think will turn out a good thing—take up about six months or so—maybe a little more. It will take me to most of the big cities—from East to West. Now, Calla, what's to be done with you? There are your aunts in Scotland; will you go to them? or would you like to come with me?"

The question suffused Calla's cheeks with sudden crimson and fairly took her breath away. She was too startled to know whether the agitation she felt was of pleasure or pain.

"Just as you like, papa dear," she said falteringly.

Mr. Yorke looked at her with keen affectionate scrutiny.

"What do *you* think about it, little girl?" he said. "It's not for long, you know. I'd be back with you before eight months are out. You would rather stay this side of the Atlantic—is that so?"

He had studied his daughter's face very critically, and his penetrating eyes read her better than she knew herself; for his instincts and perceptions were keen, if in what is called "reflection" he was deficient.

"I—I—might be a trouble to you, papa, I'm afraid. I wish you would entirely decide for me."

Her bosom heaved, and tears came into her eyes, which she would have been utterly at a loss to explain.

"Well—well," said her father, kindly, "we will see. There's time enough. I mayn't go for a couple of weeks. We'll see, Calla, and we won't hurry ourselves about it. There's no need to decide immediately."

They were going to the theatre that night; it was a night to which Calla had been eagerly looking forward, the night on which Miss Vanessa Vavasour was to play Helen in *The Hunchback* for a benefit. And Felix had said, "Everybody will be there!"

"Shall you?" Calla had asked.

"Oh, I—of course."

Now the evening has come, and the theatre is full, and Calla, looking pale and thoughtful, but charming in her white dress and pink opera-cloak, sits in the stalls, quite unconscious of being the focus of the opera-glasses of a box-full of young men who are looking out for beauties. She is unaccountably agitated and depressed and annoyed with herself. She does not know what she wishes. She loves her father; she loves change and travelling; and any nervousness or fear of a ten days' voyage is as utterly unknown to her as fear or "nerves" in any form have ever

been. And if travelling of any kind is pleasant to her, how far more than merely pleasant would it be to see America, the land where her father had spent so many years—where Felix Grey had lived—and with which, through father and friend, she already feels familiar.

Then how is it that she does not catch delightedly at the idea? why does she feel this uncertainty and agitation? she asks herself impatiently and wonderingly. Surely she must be foolishly over-excited; to-morrow she will be calm, and then will no doubt wish to go with her father, and look back surprised to her present strange reluctance, and wonder how for a moment she could have hesitated. And he, that dear father! how good he is! how tenderly and kindly he leaves her free to make her choice, implying that whatever course she elects to take will be not only good, but best! Yes, to-morrow she will be calm and will talk it over with him and decide.

But now, this is to-night, and she is glancing round the theatre watchfully; and as she sees familiar figure after figure file into the stalls or appear in front of the boxes, and still catches no glimpse of Felix Grey, she is thinking, with a pang that makes her catch her breath with a sigh, "How far, how far off America is! a whole half-world away! how sad it would be to feel herself so far from the city that was her home! Without friendship and sympathy, without home and friends, what would the delights of change be worth? and would even her father's society prove all-in-all to her in the absence of home and friends—and Felix?"

If only Felix had not returned last month from Chicago, her feelings might have been very different. This great *if* Calla rather feels than thinks; but it is in her mind, an unwonted consciousness. Not one thing alone, but *everything* would be different to her, if Felix were on the

other side of the Atlantic still. Now the overture is nearly done, and the house is nearly filled. Mr. Yorke is enjoying himself very much, recognising friends to the right and left, and marking time and tune silently on his knee. The Tregarnes are in a box, Will and Netta in the front, as the ornamental division of the family, and the elder members like shadows behind the curtains. Dick Dorvil has got a book of the words, and is marking passages "to be looked out for" with a lead pencil. There are

> "Critics to right of them,
> Critics to left of them,
> Critics behind them,"

whose power of "volleying and thundering" will be made manifest ere long. Mr. Treves, in the pit, is pointing out beauties and celebrities to a friend, and indicating Netta Tregarne and Calla Yorke as especial friends of his.

The curtain moves a little; somebody is

peeping round, probably to judge of the house.

"Whose is the mysterious eye that is invariably seen glaring through a chink of the curtain?" speculates Calla, who is not so absorbed in her own thoughts as to ignore everything passing around her—who, indeed, is sufficiently awake to have bowed to everybody she knows, and inspected and criticised several people she does not know. Just as the curtain rises, a party are coming into one of the stage boxes; she turns her attention to them and recognises them. It is Felix at last—Felix in company with three other gentlemen who represent respectively, Art, Literature, and the Drama.

Calla's heart flutters a little with relief and satisfaction; and she settles herself luxuriously in her stall with a little sigh of preparatory enjoyment and resolution to put all thoughts of her own affairs away for the present.

The play goes well. The Julia of the night, off the stage, is not a beauty; but to-night, in the yellow glare of the gas-light, she looks not only pretty, but quite incredibly and startlingly ingenuous and innocent; and the audience do not inquire how much of her complexion and her expression is put on with her costume. Clifford makes love as naturally as is possible under the circumstances; and Helen—bright, blonde Vanessa Vavasour—is, thus far, more interesting than sentimental Julia.

After the first act, there is a general exodus from the box where Felix is, not that this box is at all singular in that. The box people have come down from their eminence to speak to their friends in the stalls; the stalls have gone up to visit the boxes; the lobbies are full. Mr. Yorke has gone up to speak to the Tregarnes; and Calla waits alone—looking for Felix to come. However, it is not Felix

who comes to her, it is Dick Dorvil, who bends his six feet of height gracefully, and leans on the back of an adjoining stall as he talks to her. The only remark of his in which she takes any interest, and the only one which she passes over with professed indifference, is to the effect that "Grey and Howell are behind the scenes."

The interval between the acts is over; and everybody is hurrying back to their own places; and Mr. Yorke has returned to Calla's side; but Felix Grey and his friend do not make their appearance until the curtain has risen. Standing in the front of the box, he smiles at Calla, and she returns the smile. Their relation is too frank and friendly, and her nature too candid and naïve, for pretences of not seeing and assumptions of looking in opposite directions. And after the second act, Felix makes his way to the Yorkes; and they exchange a few words, and praise

Helen and criticise Clifford; and after the third act he comes again.

By this time Calla has been melted to tears—an unusual weakness on her part, but this night she is overstrung and excited—and has surreptitiously dried her tears behind her fan; and her bright eyes are looking liquidly lustrous and soft as she raises them to meet his.

And this time, while Felix leans with folded arms over the back of a vacant stall, and looks at Calla and talks to her father, Mr. Yorke tells Felix of his intended journey. And the very first remark that Felix makes, is—

"What are you going to do with Calla?"

"I haven't quite made up my mind yet. It would scarcely be well, perhaps, to take a young girl roughing it and drifting about with me. Her aunt Sarah is in Scotland, you see. I don't quite know yet about taking Calla or leaving her."

"If you do leave her, let her come and stay with us," observed Felix, with some eagerness. "She is to come to us for a month this Summer, you know; it will only be lengthening her visit a little, if you'll let her stay with us while you are away."

Calla knew her own wishes clearly and suddenly now; a new light was turned upon her mind that chased away all the wavering shadows of uncertainty. A bright half-tremulous smile flashed over her face, and a new light sparkled in her eyes, as she looked up at Felix; and the colour rose softly and suffused her cheeks to their deepest crimson. She opened her lips to speak, but hesitated, and looked at her father and was silent, and bent her head, feeling the blush burn to her very brow. He had read and rightly interpreted the unconscious betrayal of his daughter's face, and was looking at her kindly, and more thoughtfully than usual.

"It wouldn't do for this little girl to be

rushing about travelling day and night half over the world, I think. There's time enough for her to travel, and I shan't be long gone. Perhaps she had better stay quiet with some kind friends here."

And although nothing more was said upon the subject then, they all felt and knew that it was, or soon would be, so decided, and that Calla would be left, at least, for a time, under Mrs. Darrell's care.

The drop-scene drew up again; the fifth act began; and Felix Grey hurried out of the stalls, crushing himself nearly flat in his amiable eagerness to get past without crushing the ladies' dresses or treading on their toes. Calla enjoyed the last act, and wept over it; and when Felix threw a big bouquet to Vanessa Vavasour, Calla felt no objection, and indeed was proud alike of his courtesy, his dramatic appreciation, and his skilful aim being thus manifested in public. And when they met in the lobby, and were borne along together with

the crowd down the stairs, it was of the play they talked, of Miss Vavasour, of the various Helens they had seen or had not seen; and of the proposed plans for the remainder of the Summer they only spoke a few words.

But Calla was glad and gay; she had no idea herself of the reason why her heart was fluttering so excitedly and happily; she could only have explained it by the facts that she loved the theatre and music and gaiety, and had enjoyed her evening. She would have been horror-stricken and angry had anyone suggested to her that a plan which comprised a separation between her and her father could cause her this light-hearted buoyant exhilaration of spirit. She only knew that by a sudden reaction her spirits had risen brightly to their gayest height. She laughed as she caught up her trailing white dress and gathered her opera-cloak round her, and followed Felix and her

father along the pavement in search of a cab, jostled by the hurrying crowd around the theatre's entrance; and the last Felix saw of her that evening was the bright flushed face smiling a gay good night out of one window of the dingy four-wheeler, while Tom Yorke thrust half his portly person out of the other window, and shouted directions to the cabman. Felix himself felt that "his bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne!" and scattered some loose silver among the little street Arabs who were darting under the horses' heels and dodging in between the vehicles in search of a respondent to their offers of "Cab, sir?" "Cab, ma'am?"

The decision that had been virtually, though tacitly and suddenly arrived at, in a few words between the acts of the play, that evening was not very likely to be reversed. If Felix had not spoken those few words that night bending over Calla's seat in the stalls, if Mr. Yorke had not

happened to notice his daughter's look at that moment, the morrow—when Calla and her father were to have "talked it over"—might have decided otherwise. But as it was, a half dozen words, a flush, a smile,—and it was fixed—(as more important things have been fixed as fate ere now by a smile and a blush)—that while seas would roll between Calla and her father she was not to be parted from those her dearest friends, and that on his roving and adventurous wanderings (which perhaps were scarcely of the kind it is best for a young girl to share), Tom Yorke would go alone.

# BOOK III.

"WE ARE IN LOVE'S LAND TO-DAY!"

"I see my Oread coming down—
O this is the day!
O beautiful creature! what am I
That I dare to look her way?
Think I may hold dominion sweet,
Lord of the pulse that is lord of her breast,
And dream of her beauty with tender dread.

"My bride to be, my evermore delight,
My own heart's heart and ownest own, farewell,
It is but for a little space I go!"

TENNYSON—*Maud.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### "RED NOON OF LOVE, AND LIFE AND SUN."

CALLA had more than one offer of a temporary home during her father's absence. The Tregarnes invited her to stay "at least a part of the time" with them. Mrs. King wrote to ask if she would come to Scotland, but added that, as it was an invalid house, it might prove rather dull and depressing for a bright-spirited girl. Mrs. Darrell and Isabel united in an affectionate and cordial invitation; and it need scarcely be said that this latter was the one which was accepted.

A sojourn at "the dear old Château," was a delightful prospect to Calla, even

though Felix would not be there all the time. His present occupation on a weekly paper would necessitate his being in London a great deal, but he would run over to La Basse-Rive as often as he could, and that would, *should* be, often enough.

As Calla sagely observed to herself, in her bright content with the world in general, and her own lot in particular, "It would be quite too much of a good thing to have Felix there every day and all day long! And even when he is not there, it is his home, and there are dear Mrs. Darrell and Isabel."

It was agreed that as soon as Mr. Yorke should have been duly "seen off" at the railway station—and on this seeing off Calla especially insisted, and would have travelled down to Liverpool to extend it even to the departure of the vessel if her father had approved of the idea. As soon, then, as he had been seen off, Felix was to escort Calla over to the Château,

where he himself would spend a few weeks, his summer holiday.

So Felix and Calla drove with Mr. Yorke to the station, and saw the old American trunk labelled in one of the few spots left uncovered by defaced labels from almost every civilised city on the face of the globe, and fortified themselves against the approaching parting by effervescing glasses of iced lemonade and cognac in the refreshment room, and bought sandwiches which Calla, now at the last moment getting lachrymose, packed tearfully in her father's bag. She also invested, as a parting offering, in various comic periodicals, which she thrust affectionately into his breast pocket, blinking and dropping a tear on "Punch's" pictured dog Toby.

"Well, good-bye, Felix, my boy, take care of my little girl! With your mother and you, I shall feel she's in good hands."

"You may trust her to us," responded

Felix warmly, and then added on impulse, as the bell rang and the parting moment had come, "You'd trust her to us—to us all—for longer than a mere few months' visit, wouldn't you?"

"I think I would, old fellow," said Tom Yorke, and wrung his hand.

Calla winked away her tears disconsolately as she watched the train rush and roar away in a wreath of smoke; but she was smiling gaily enough when, an hour or two afterwards, Felix and she took the train that carried them on the first stage of their journey to La Basse-Rive.

There was no one like Felix for cheering and comforting, no one like him for picturing in the very hour of parting, the meeting that would grow out of that separation, and drawing through a telescope the bright things of the future near.

So by the time they were in the train, Calla was happy, and enjoyed her journey

as much perhaps as that delightful first journey on the same line to the same goal three years ago. As much, and yet differently! Who shall draw a comparison between the two happiest seasons of a life and say, "This is the brightest!"? Who shall weigh in the balance one joy against another and decide rationally how the scale turns?

Of that happy first journey they spoke this time, and so lived it over again mile by mile that the two pleasures seemed blended into one.

It was a mild early August evening when they reached the Château de la Basse-Rive; the dogs barked, and the great gates creaked on their hinges as they rolled back to admit the carriage, just as of old.

Mr. and Mrs. Darrell stood on the threshold, and Isabel's pretty white-robed figure came fluttering down the steps to

welcome the arrivals. *Cocher* smiled sympathetically at the meeting as he pocketed his *pour-boire.*

"Merci, monsieur—merci, madame," he said to the two travellers, whereat Calla blushed and Isabel laughed.

How delightful Calla felt it to be to deposit her bags and baskets and herself on the stiff straight-backed velvet sofa in the dear old salon again! to see Marie-Rose in her flapping white cap bustle in with a tray of cakes and wine, while Claudine, successor of Fanchette, seized and bore off the bags. Calla felt she was at home instantly—at a real and beloved home, after an absence just long enough to endear it to her the more.

Isabel was tranquilly delighted to have Calla with her again; Mr. Darrell patted her head paternally with unusual demonstration; and Mrs. Darrell, as she bade her good night, said, with a calmly maternal look in her beautiful serene eyes,

"It is a real pleasure to us to have you here, dear child. You are my other daughter, you know."

Mrs. Darrell would not have so innocently added the last part of this remark if she had noticed Felix and Calla as watchfully that evening as she did the following day. That night she uttered those words in all simplicity and in affectionate hospitality. But the next evening an idea was dawning in her mind that those unconscious words spoken at random might have hit near a truth of which Calla herself was yet unconscious. And as the days wore on, this idea became a certainty.

Mrs. Darrell had not seen Felix and Calla together for many months; and now she saw plainly that the girl had become a woman, and that the friendship between those two, begun when the girl was scarcely more than a child, was now, that she was in the full bloom and glory of early womanhood, daily deepening and warming

into something dearer, closer, sweeter than friendship.

She read the story in Calla's face, in a new-born shyness and softness, a dawning light of happiness other and deeper than mere girlish gaiety, a warmer colouring of coming and going blushes; she read it in Felix's large brown eyes—the one beauty he had inherited from his mother—which brightened when they fixed on Calla's face. The atmosphere of an undeclared love, slowly ripening towards its acknowledgment, clung about these two, and haloed them with a tender sacred light.

All the circle began to perceive it soon, though the mother's eyes saw keenest and first; and on her the conviction came swift and strong at once, although she never gave it words, even to her husband, for there was little expansiveness of confidence between Mr. and Mrs. Darrell, their reticence springing, probably, less

from lack of affection than from natural and mutual reserve.

"The course of true love" seemed in this instance very likely to "run smooth." It was not "misgraffed in respect of years," there was, if the language of eyes and blushes is to be trusted, a perfect "sympathy in choice." "War, death, and sickness" seemed as far from it as the shadows of night from noonday; and if "it stood upon the choice of friends," there was no apparent reason for anticipating obstacles in that channel.

The Darrells were fond of Calla, and Mr. Yorke liked Felix; and even the worst enemies of the two families could not have accused either of worldliness or of mercenary views on marriage. While yet no word even hinting at a mutual love had been spoken, of course, there could be only vague and half-defined and altogether unexpressed sentiments on the part of the

lookers-on. But they felt that this transition state of things could not last, and that sooner or later the hour would come when the thin veil must be torn down, and the two that day by day were silently, unconsciously growing nearer together, must meet and mingle in the perfect comprehension of mutual love.

Meanwhile, Calla was absolutely happy, and never looked beyond the happy present. The bright running river of her life seemed just now to be resting in a lovely calm inlet, still as a lake, smiling in golden sunlight, with folded water-lilies dreamily floating on the placid bosom of the water—the smiling, sleeping water that heard no murmur from the sea that lay beyond, and caught no sound of the dashing spray and the surf of the far-off breakers to which the fairest river runs.

So her bright, calm life lay still in its peaceful present, and she took no thought

for the morrow, even in hope, for hope was just now as the very atmosphere of her life, and its unnamed presence pervaded all, while she was no more conscious of it than of the air she breathed.

She loved La Basse-Rive with a mingling of the tenderness with which we regard our old home, the delight with which we revel in the beautiful and new. She liked its very drawbacks, and in her exuberant spirits and healthy youth, she drew an inexhaustible fund of entertainment from its inconveniences. She appeared to enjoy the occasion, when one day, owing to an oversight and a domestic misunderstanding, dinner was left entirely to the imagination, and an extemporised substitute, called supper, consisted chiefly of toast and tarts; she rejoiced aloud when, another day, there was discovered to be a dearth of candles and an utter deficiency of oil in the establishment, and they had to spend the evening in the dark, reserving the two

relics of wax candle for the hour of retiring.

Felix, Calla, and Isabel read the sunny mornings away on the sands, made up impromptu picnics in the woods, and broke loose from all fetters like children let out on a holiday; they kept no hours, or, rather, kept all varieties of hours, returned to dinner early or late, and to *déjeuner* often not at all, supplying the place of that meal by biscuits and sandwiches, partaken of at intervals. Mr. Darrel let the young people go their way. So long as they did not sing or play when he was writing, and left his sanctum sacred, his equanimity was undisturbed; he only wished to see them happy.

Only over Mrs. Darrell the shadow of sadness always seemed to brood. Her presence, always a pleasant and soothing one, with something sympathetic and charming in its very quietude, was not an atmosphere of strength and brightness.

It was the sweet warm southern breeze of a Summer evening, not the bracing of the "brave north-easter!" And at this time the contemplation of all this young hope and happiness in the air around her never seemed to lift and lighten her spirits. Indeed it was perhaps chiefly by contrast with their brightness that the shadow over *her*, slight, silent, and so unvarying that it passed unnoticed, seemed more perceptible now.

"Mamma dear, does your head ache this morning?" asked Isabel, as Mrs. Darrell stood on the threshold of the long open window, looking out into the garden where Felix and Calla were taking a long time and making a great business about filling a small épergne with flowers.

"No, dear; why?"

"You don't look well," said her daughter, whose soft observant eyes had noted that Mrs. Darrell's cheek was unusually pale and her face full of a sadness that

was almost pain. "Is there anything the matter?"

"Nothing, dear child."

"No tiresome letters this morning?" pursued Isabel.

"Letters? no!" replied Mrs. Darrell quickly, "what letters should there be? How inquisitive you are, Bell! If there were anything of the smallest interest, should I not have told you?"

"Yes, mother darling, of course. And of course I am inquisitive if I think anything is worrying you," Isabel said with gentle tenacity, stroking her mother's hand.

"My darling, there is nothing," Mrs. Darrell answered affectionately, drawing Isabel to her side, and leaning her cheek against her daughter's fair head so that Isabel could not look up in her face, so clouded with an anguish of tenderness and yearning and pain.

"I wish, dear," added Mrs. Darrell

placidly, after a moment's pause, "that you and Calla would run down to the farm for a dozen eggs and bring a little flour from the mill. Marie-Rose is very forgetful. She has been so stupid this morning. French servants are really a trial."

"We will go directly," replied Isabel. "Calla must have got flowers enough for two épergnes by this time, I am sure."

"Don't hurry, my sweet one; my little girl must not walk fast in the sun!" said Mrs. Darrell caressingly. Isabel was the only creature in the world to whom she was ever demonstrative, the only creature on whom she lavished caresses, the only one she ever called by tender epithets and fond diminutives, and even to her such demonstrations were rare. She kissed her now with unusual tenderness, and smiled, and kept the smile on bravely till Isabel had turned away. Then the forced lines of her face relaxed suddenly,

and the whole expression changed and drooped, and a look of hopeless pain filled her eyes, as she watched Isabel cross the lawn to Felix and Calla, and heard the light laughter as the three moved on together. She was not allowed to let slip the mask for long; Mr. Darrell soon made his appearance on the scene. He however was not sharp-sighted, and a very slight smile on the lips was generally sufficient to satisfy him and keep him in uninquisitive peace.

"I saw Felix and Calla in the garden," he began conversationally, "and where was Isabel?"

"Bell was here with me; she and Calla are going to the mill for me now."

"Do you know, my dear Gertrude, I think that Felix and Calla are getting very fond of each other?" Mr. Darrell observed, with an important air of confidence, as if he were announcing a discovery, to his

wife, who knew it a great deal better than he did.

"Do you think so?" replied Mrs. Darrell quietly.

"I do, my dear," he answered, pleased with his own astuteness, and continuing, in his slow, deliberate, dignified way, "She is a very charming girl; I am very fond of Calla."

"So are we all," she agreed sweetly.

"And Felix is a good boy—a very good boy, my dear Gertrude. You may be proud of him," he said kindly.

"Yes," Felix's mother assented gently, but with an unaccountable uneasiness in her manner, a sort of wincing, as if he had struck upon a throbbing wound. "He is good," and as she said it she looked away over the garden bushes with eyes that did not see them, eyes across which there came a humid mist that made them look softer and more beautiful, but sadder far than

their wont. They were only softly pensive and dreamily melancholy as a rule; the new pain, and inexpressible hopeless yearning in their look, the regret as of a past beyond recall, of even a present bitterness, attracted even Mr. Darrell's notice now.

"There is nothing in it to make you sad, my dear—I think, I hope not, at least! Young people will be young people. I suppose you have not been forming any other plans for Felix?" he said, looking at her questioningly.

"No; I have never dreamt of planning for him. I leave all such things to the destiny that is quite certain to arrange them, with or without our assistance."

"Exactly so," agreed Mr. Darrell, placidly. "It is never very much good interfering. Human nature, especially in youth, shoots out into so many inconsistencies and eccentricities; it affords us so many surprises, that really when one comes to

my age one is glad to sit and watch the world go by, and decide comfortably from one's easy-chair that, if matches are made in heaven, the pairs too often get broken asunder in their journey down. Not that I mean any unkind allusion to Felix and Calla; there appears to me nothing very incompatible in them, if Calla is old enough to know her own mind," added Mr. Darrell, to whom Calla still appeared a child.

Meanwhile Isabel and Calla had gone on their marketing errand.

"I enjoy this kind of thing so much," said Calla buoyantly, as they sauntered along a shady path. "I shall never like buying eggs or flour in a proper London shop again!"

"In Winter I should like a paved street better than this path. It is a perfect Slough of Despond in the bad season, as you'll find," said Isabel.

"Never mind, we shan't mind splashing our stockings so much when we tramp in

double file, shall we? And we shall march together all this Winter," replied Calla, to whom it was not one of the least pleasant things at La Basse-Rive, to know that her presence was a real delight, her companionship a real boon to Isabel.

"That's nice to think," said Isabel, with a responsive smile that made her look prettier than ever, as she tripped along with her soft, light step, a basket swinging slowly in her hand, her golden hair tied up in a mass of loose curls under a quaint, old-fashioned, striped calico sunbonnet, the *raison d'être* whereof no one knew, unless it were to keep her fair complexion guiltless of tan or freckle, which purpose might as well have been answered by something more modern. Calla's pretty, London milliner-made hat was not a whit more becoming than that "old-world" headgear of Isabel's, and certainly less useful. In consequence of its insufficiency of brim (albeit what it lacked in latitude was

made up in altitude of flowers and bows) Calla's naturally fair complexion was sun-tinted to a more warm and southern hue, which suited her great, dark, black-fringed eyes well, but left an oddly contrasting and betraying band of whiteness at the top of her forehead just where the hat-brim went.

The farm-yard gate stood open; it was a question whether it was ever shut, whether its weak hinges would ever allow it to shut, whether—with Nero, the evil-looking, heavy-jowled, black-brindled dog chained hard by—it was ever necessary it should be shut. There was nobody in the yard at the moment the two girls entered; a mild-eyed cow put her head over a half-door and lowed gently at them; Nero barked one lazy bark, but he did not think they were very dangerous intruders.

The establishment is not so clean as an English farm-yard is, or ought to be; and Calla catches her muslin dress daint-

ily away from a huge, fat, black pig who waddles towards her, grunting, with earthy snout. He has been grouting in a rubbish heap, which stands in a more conspicuous place in the path than seems at all necessary or desirable, in company with two brothers in blackness and adipose development. A brood of yellow chickens are running tamely about; an anxious hen clucks after them from a dilapidated wicker coop; and Calla's admiration is attracted by what she terms "a darling little piggy," which is small and spotted, with a curly tail. A blue-bloused man looks in at the other end of the yard, and, perceiving the visitors, retires modestly, and pushes forward in his place a snowy-capped and starched aproned woman, whose stiff, white linen looks incongruously clean in the dirt of the farm-yard, and who approaches with a shrill and polite,

"Bonjour, mesdemoiselles."

Isabel makes known her requirements,

and Madame passes on the request.

"Nanon! des œufs—frais, bien frais, vois-tu!—Combien, mademoiselle? Une douzaine, mais oui! Nanon! une douzaine!"

Nanon, who is also snowy and starched as to cap, and to whose fat, square face, browner than any chestnut, no head-dress could be more unbecoming, presently brings the eggs in her apron. Madame places them tenderly in Isabel's basket, wherein already reposes a layer of hay for their couch; no payment is made, as the relations between the Château and the farm are on the credit system, and Isabel and Calla walk off with their prize.

"Nanon grows uglier and uglier, doesn't she?" observes Isabel, pensively, half lifting the cover of her little basket to peep at the eggs as they trudge along.

"I suppose life has some pleasures for her and the hundreds like her, ugly and hard-worked. But it puzzles me to know what they can be," says Calla sincerely,

out of the fulness of her joyous youth.

"Felix would tell you, I daresay; only he would look deep down into the question of happiness in general first."

"And then he would come up to the surface, to a new cap, a saint's fête-day, or——Oh! Bell, what else *can* they have?"

Calla and Isabel are not especially uncomprehending or self-absorbed natures, but they understand about as much of the human lives which are running parallel with theirs not a quarter of a mile away, as of the manners and customs in the moon, or as much as any human creature comprehends of the lives of all save those who are crawling on the same cabbage-leaf, until that lesson of universal sympathy is learnt which no depth of suffering, no height of joy, can teach to some.

They reach the mill, and run up the wooden steps at the entrance. Isabel, modestly refraining from opening the half-door which leads to a dark entry, and a

ladder-like flight of stairs, calls out, "Jeannette!" and receiving no answer, louder, with a shrill accent on the last syllable, "Jean-*nette!*"

"Elle est là-haut," says a gruff voice from somewhere.

"Qui est là?" says a shrill voice from above. Then a pair of large sabot-shod feet appear clattering down the stairs, then an apron, then a kerchief, and then a cap come into sight.

"Oh, pardon, mademoiselle," says Jeannette, apologetically, flinging open the half-gate. Isabel is liked in the neighbourhood—"Elle est si gentille!" the people say. Jeannette's sister, Angélique, hearing the visitor's voice, next appears upon the scene, white cap first, then kerchief, apron, petticoat, and sabots, as she arises from the regions below step by step, in a manner suggestive of a stage trapdoor.

While the flour is being fetched for Bell

and Calla, they summon Jeannette's child, a favourite little *protégée* of theirs—a toddling, black-eyed, round, plump "beauty of a baby," who, with truly national politeness, holds on to Isabel's skirt with one fat small hand, while with the other she reaches up an offering of a dandelion. Isabel kisses her for the *cadeau*, and gravely pins it into the bosom of her dress, to Jeannette's delight. Calla is rather more shy of children—strange children, that is—than of grown-up people. Isabel knows no shyness of man, woman, or child. Calla carries the parcel of flour, and Bell the egg-basket, as they turn homewards.

On their way they meet Felix, who stows away into his coat-tail pocket a red book that he carries, and takes their charges from them, tucking the flour-bag under one arm, and swinging the basket in his other hand.

"Don't you pick the beast of burden's

pocket while he carries your traps for you," he observes.

"We want the book!"

"You're going to have it—on the sands, and not one minute before. We're going to finish the story just on the spot where we began it."

The story they were then reading was "Bhanavar the Beautiful." Felix had made fun of the girls at first for selecting a fairy story; but after looking at it, and after being requested to do so by Calla, had consented not only to read it, but to read it aloud. It was Isabel who had chosen the story; it was thoroughly to Isabel's taste, and she had already read it, having long ago climbed up the library ladder and selected it from the ranks.

Thus it happens this morning that Felix and Calla walk down to the sands with the book, while Isabel turns homewards and betakes herself to the Château with the eggs and flour.

Marie-Rose is to be initiated this day into the mysteries of a certain *gâteau à la crème* from a recipe Isabel has discovered; and Isabel is to join Felix and Calla on the sands "presently." Bell's "presentlys" are very vague measurements of time; and they are not without misgivings that the "Story of Bhanavar the Beautiful" may be finished before she makes her appearance; but this does not appear to trouble them much, probably because they are so well aware that Bell has read the story before.

They take the biggest umbrella they can find, and seek a suitable spot on the sands where they may wedge it into a chink between the rocks so as to form a shelter.

It is one of those still, sultry days when the clear sky impresses one with a dazzling sense of the measurelessness of those depths of blue, those depths that seem to deepen bluer and bluer as you gaze, until you feel lost in the infinite unapproachable

glory like a little leaf in a great, calm ocean. Under the intense melting azure of the sky, the sea lies in a lazy, slumberous calm, almost too languid to lavish its soft and lingering kisses on the shore.

This is the sort of day when it would seem only fit that a gorgeous-striped, velvet-limbed panther should lie stretched out upon those yellow sands and basking in that burning sun. It is a day that somehow suits with the barbaric splendour and Oriental imagery of the story which Felix reads aloud to Calla, and yet suits less well with it, perhaps, than would a stained-glass conservatory, its atmosphere heavy with the aromatic scents of tropical plants, and through its richly tinted panes that great brazen sun pouring in many-coloured rays.

The story with its fanciful gloom, its warm glow of colouring, all black shadows and jewelled lights, possesses a strange fascination for Calla. It is not in a style

which ordinarily holds much attraction for Felix; but perhaps at this season his imagination is more exalted and excited than usual; or perhaps the silent interest of his listener has its influence over him. Anyhow, he reads the story to the end, and gives not the slightest sign of being tired or "bored."

Felix is not gifted with any especial elocutionary talent. His accent partakes a little too much of the monotone, and all feeling is rather implied by a certain tone of suppression than developed and expressed in his voice. Still his reading aloud is fairly effective; Calla thinks it perfection, and listens rapt and devoted to the last words.

She does not thank him for his exertions to please and amuse her, and his endeavours remain unrecompensed and unacknowledged, except so far as a soft smile and a half sigh, and a whispered "Is that all?" may be considered as recom-

pense. She takes the book from his hand, and turns over the pages slowly, dwelling on a passage here and there, reading now and then a few words aloud, for this story of love and magic holds a strange charm for her.

"I have been beloved by the noblest three of earth. I will ask no more of Love," she repeats, in a dreamy whisper, looking up from the page as she reads these words, looking out over the sea, her dark eyes glowing under the light, tremulous shadow of the slender sunburnt hand with which she screens them from the light.

"Three? Why, Calla, wouldn't one be enough?"

He fixes his eyes inquiringly on her face, and draws half unconsciously an inch nearer, but she avoids meeting his look.

"Oh, in real life, I suppose, yes. And Bhanavar was so easy to win, it is almost a wonder she was content with *three*," she replies lightly, but colouring a little.

"Is there any *one*, Calla, with you? any *one* with whom you would be content?" he asks, completely ignoring the question of Bhanavar's Oriental readiness to be wooed and won.

Calla does not look round; indeed, she averts her face a little further away from him; still she knows perfectly well how he is gazing at her.

"Perhaps there may be," she answers, a little embarrassedly, but trying to speak lightly still.

"Who is he?" inquires Felix sharply.

"I didn't say there *was* a 'he,'" she replies petulantly in her turn, and blushing painfully now. "I only said there *may be* —somewhere in the world."

"You only look upon me as a brother," says Felix, turning a little away from her, with a sudden touch of gloom in his tone, and withal with an unconscious interrogation—a tentative appeal.

They are like two children shyly skir-

mishing around a point before either dares to come to it.

"And you look upon me as a sister," she says, in a very low voice, but very positively.

"Do I?" he rejoins.

Her head droops lower; the ribbon upon her bosom flutters gently to and fro; she picks up a handful of sand, and lets the yellowish grains slip through her fingers slowly, as through an hour-glass, watching the process with an appearance of the deepest interest. While she watches the dropping sand, he watches her, and so they are silent for a minute or two.

Then he takes her hand, yellow dust and all, into his, and says—

"Calla?"

There is no answer, except that a sweeter beauty, softer than a blush and lovelier than a smile, suffuses her face, and slowly, as if drawn by some magnetism she is powerless to resist, that downcast face

looks up, and the deep eyes, beautiful in a new-born shyness and wonder, turn to his.

Their eyes meet, and the hour has come.

## CHAPTER IX.

### "GO NOT, HAPPY DAY, FROM THE SHINING FIELDS."

FELIX and Calla had no intention of keeping to themselves the interesting discovery that they were mutually created for each other, and that Providence had evidently designed them expressly as mates, in consequence of which discovery they intended duly to carry out the decree of Providence, and unite the courses of their future lives in one channel.

With the intention of imparting this information, Felix straightway sought his mother in her room, while Calla, bathed in blushes, radiant in a rosy glow of new and scarcely yet comprehended happiness,

pleaded guilty to the charge which Isabel, after one long look on her face, proceeded to lay against her; and the two girls plunged heart and soul into those two *rôles* so delightful to girlhood, the confidante and the heroine of a love-story—to the former, of course, especially delightful when there are complications and difficulties in the way of the latter, but pleasant enough even when the story runs as simply and as smoothly as this promised to do.

Mrs. Darrell was sitting alone in her boudoir, leaning her head upon her hand; she turned with a little start as Felix entered, and, whether consciously or unconsciously he never thought, she dropped a newspaper that had been lying on her lap down to the ground. He felt rather uncertain as to how to begin his errand, and glancing vaguely round, as if in search of some suggestion, his eye fell on the paper, and he observed, casually,

"What have you there, mother? This week's paper?"

"No, nothing," she answered, indifferently and languidly, scarcely troubling to follow his eye, and see what he was looking at.

Felix, however, having come close to his mother, stooped and picked the paper up, in that motiveless way with which we so often perform some trifling and unnecessary action, while our thoughts are absorbed elsewhere.

"Ah, Australian!" he said, glancing at the type and title with a little interest. "I always like a glimpse of the old papers. What a treat it used to be to get an *Argus* up the country! Anything in it?" glancing carelessly down the columns.

"Nothing at all," replied Mrs. Darrell, with a tired look, wearily pushing her hair off her temples, and passing her hand across her eyes.

"Are not you well, mother?" asked Felix, noticing that she looked worn and pale.

"Mr. Darrell and Isabel have asked me that six times to-day," she said, resignedly. "I am perfectly well. Put that paper down, Felix. You have something to say to me, have you not?"

She looked at him intently; she had read, from the first word he spoke, that his thoughts were pre-occupied, and pleasantly pre-occupied too.

"Yes," he admitted frankly and readily. "I don't know whether you will be surprised, mother—I do not think you will. I think you can guess what it is!"

His colour was just a tinge heightened, and his face wore a look of that deep gladness happier than a smile. His mother's womanly perceptions could not fail to interpret it aright. Yet the happiness on his face seemed to reflect itself only in pain on hers, as she said,

"Is it about Calla, Felix? Is it *that* you have come to tell me?"

"Yes," he admitted. "And you are not surprised?"

"No," she answered, with a slight tremor in her voice, "I am not surprised. Only to-day I—I have been thinking!"

She paused, not so much in hesitation, but rather as having said all she meant to say.

It was seldom she looked so long and so earnestly at Felix as now, and seldom with so strange a look of unaccountable pain. From the very light on his face a cloud seemed to pass to hers, and brood there darkly. It was as if for once the sorrow that always seemed to throw a shadow over her life—itself invisible, unknown, and only to be guessed by the shade it cast—arose in its own dark shape into sight, looked out for once unveiled from her eyes. In those soft secret eyes, with their long drooping lashes, and their

sweet calm of unstirred sadness, it was seldom that anyone had seen the flash of passion, seldomer still the trace of tears. So it was with a surprise and concern proportionate to the rarity of the occurrence that Felix noted the trouble that broke up her usual tranquillity, the irrepressible tears that blinded and brimmed over her eyes as she gazed at him.

"Mother," he said anxiously—"why, mother, you are not sorry? What is it moves you so?"

He would have taken her in his arms, and tried to soothe her apparent agitation, but she did not respond to his caress. Rather she seemed to shrink into herself, and draw away from any demonstration, to be half alarmed and half annoyed at her own weakness. In silence she recovered herself, and the old quietude, if now a trifle constrained, drew gradually like a veil over her face again by the time

she had wiped away the traces of her tears.

"Do not mind me, Felix," she said; "it is not that I had not expected this, only it naturally touches me a little deeply when it comes."

Her emotion had surprised and distressed her son; man-like, he always felt helpless and perplexed before a woman's weeping. Her restored calm, however, quickly relieved him, for he was by nature too straightforward to suspect unknown undercurrents in a life whose surface he knew so well, and he began to think that perhaps it really was, as she said, only natural that she should be moved at such a time both by memories of self and selfless hopes and sympathies.

Notwithstanding the unaccountable agitation, so rare in *her*, which he at this hour forgot, but in after-time remembered, Mrs. Darrell appeared to have no objection to

offer, no obstacle to set up in the lovers' path.

Before the end of their brief interview, she was quite her old serene self again; and when Felix said, kneeling by her side, as he used to do when a boy, "Come, mother, give me a kiss, and tell me you will love my Calla all the more now," she answered sweetly,

"I do not know that I can promise to love her any *more*, my boy, for she is so very dear to me already."

With this eminently satisfactory conclusion, Felix left his mother, and went to Calla, and forgot all about the Australian newspaper he had picked up, until next day it occurred to him to ask for it, that he might see how things in general were going on at the other side of the world. It was not very surprising that it could not be found, as the roll-call of articles returned missing at La Basse-Rive was always a long one—indeed, it would have

been very surprising if it had been found, considering that Mrs. Darrell had torn it up and dispersed its fragments to the four winds of heaven, all except one slip, which she cut out and locked away in a secret drawer of her desk, in obedience to the universal feminine instinct of keeping relics, more especially if they happen to be of a compromising kind.

Mr. Darrell was as amenable to the young people's wishes as his wife. He, however, said that nothing ought to be considered settled until the approval of Calla's father had been obtained. Mr. Yorke must be written to; his answer must be waited for; there must be no open and unconditional arrangements entered into until that answer had been received.

With this view of the subject, Mrs. Darrell quite coincided, and Felix and Calla had not the slightest opposition to offer to it.

"Papa is sure not to be disagreeable. He never *is* disagreeable—he is always a darling," Calla observed, trustfully and contentedly, as the lovers talked over their plans in a cosy *tête-à-tête*.

"And what does it matter whether things are *called* 'settled,' or not?" queried Felix, philosophically. "We haven't so much to do with the world here, that the world need care whether our engagement is settled or *un*settled. It's fixed enough for us, Calla, isn't it?—you are mine, and I am yours, never to be parted any more."

"No, never any more," she said, uttering these saddest of all words in the happiest of tones. "And I really think, Felix, that when we have got papa's blessing by post, in approved form, we shall not feel a bit more engaged than we do now."

"Do you feel engaged, my lily?" he responded, with a bright smile, half amused and wholly loving, lighting up his face. "My white lily, you never knew what it

was to feel 'engaged' before, did you? Is it nice? or do you wish yourself free to pick and choose again?"

And they wandered off into that lovers' talk which is, of all conversation under the heavens, the most absorbingly interesting to the speakers, and the most utterly boring to every other human creature.

Mrs. Darrell must have been very happy to witness their content. Yet her never exuberant spirits seemed rather to sink than to brighten now. Perhaps to look on at the castle-building and the golden dreams of these happy young lovers, recalled her own early wooing, and cast a cloud of memory over her soul. Perhaps Isabel's divination was right, when she said confidentially to Calla,

"I fancy it makes her think of poor Glynnley, and remember the days of *his* engagement" (in the lowered voice, and with the cautious look round with which Glynnley Grey's name was always men-

tioned at La Basse-Rive on the rare occasions when it was mentioned at all).

Mrs. Darrell was very kind and tender to Calla, but according to the natural rule of reserve in the family, seldom alluded confidentially to the change of her position as regarded Felix, although she made manifest her maternal sanction by allowing them ample opportunities of being as much together as the most devoted couple could reasonably demand. Only once she said to Calla, with an earnest, searching look,

"You are young, dear, but you have not lived secluded and retired here, like my Isabel. You have mixed in the outside world, you have seen other men. Is my boy really and truly your heart's choice?"

"Dear Mrs. Darrell," the girl said, caressingly, but with naïve surprise, "how could I ever have chosen any other, having once known him?"

"You cannot conceive the possibility?

Ah! child, you have dipped your feet already in the waters, you have begun the voyage—you will never touch shore again."

"If this is the sea that I am floating on now, I never *wish* to touch the shore again!"

Mrs. Darrell sighed.

"So others have thought," she said. "Heaven grant you a fair voyage, my child, for this is *life* that begins for you now! But, Calla dear, I may as well ask you one thing while we are on this subject —I know that you and my Isabel are like sisters, but do not, if you can help it, lead *her* into dreams, and fancies, and thoughts of loving and being loved like you. Don't think me mistrustful of your prudence, dear," she added kindly, and in a lighter and more careless tone; "I trust your discretion perfectly, but you know her sensitive, highly-organized temperament, and her susceptible and impressionable imagination, and I am sure you will under-

stand me when I say that I do not think it well that she should be castle-building and dreaming, and getting into the mood for any foolish romances with any of those half-bred young fellows who would hang about here if I would let them."

Calla understood and assented, and promised to be most discreet, but she thought to herself with a smile that there was very little fear of any man, young or old, well or ill-bred, being allowed the opportunity of hanging about the Château, within whose rigorously-guarded fold seldom a wolf was permitted to penetrate, although, with characteristic and inconsistent incaution, the Darrells left Isabel free to wander about according to her own will, and even would sometimes fling the gates of the home wide to some passing friend from London or Paris who appeared at least as dangerous as the poor, harmless, young men of the neighbourhood. Calla knew too, and wondered that the mother's

loving vigilance did not perceive, that the very monotony and isolation of Isabel's life was calculated to pre-dispose her to the "dreams and fancies" Mrs. Darrell seemed to dread.

The day came only too quickly when Felix must return to London. It was three weeks from that morning talk on the sands; and, although the day of his departure came all too soon, still those three weeks had been long ones. It is a mistake to think that happy hours always fly. They seem to have flown when they are gone; but in each hour of deepest happiness there are concentrated days of ordinary life. Those three weeks to Calla were a whole long Summer-time.

She and Felix were singularly suited to each other. Their natures were attuned in perfect harmony. Love between strongly contrasted characters seems a common thing, but there is generally a certain harmony and congeniality of nature under-

lying superficially opposite characteristics. Beauty may be refined, and delicate, and ethereal, and the Beast may be rough, and growling, and grizzly, but some affinity of inner nature there must be between them if Beauty and the Beast are to lead a happy life. Felix and Calla were thoroughly congenial spirits, united in a perfect harmony alike of disposition, of tastes, and talents.

Calla, of course, constituted herself Felix's copyist, reader, and general assistant in the work he had in hand. They used to sit reading over her copy of his manuscript together, she with a pencil ready for marginal notes, their two chairs drawn as close as they could possibly be set, their two heads bent together, his arm round her, her hair brushing his cheek, both of them as grave as two judges, and as happy as two children. Incredible as it may appear, the work really did progress, and chapter after chapter was neatly paged

and put away in the portfolio, the fruit of those happy hours which they confidently deemed were but the first of many such. For they, of course, were never to have a thought apart, never a separate interest; they were to work together, plan together, consult together, always, even as they did now in these the loveliest hours of life—hours so bright to those who enjoy them, and yet to all lookers-on who have *lived*, touched with an undefinable shade of sadness.

Felix and Calla worked and played, and loved and laughed the happy time away, and did not sigh for it as it passed, deeming it only the bright and rosy dawn of a still brighter and fairer day.

They went on the old rambles by sun and starlight, on the sands and in the woods, almost invariably accompanied by Isabel, who, however, often did them a kindness by odd and fitful disappearances —as sudden and unexpected as an elf

dropping down through a trap-door in a pantomime—or lingered discreetly behind to pluck figurative gooseberries.

They drove in the pony-chaise to the market of the nearest town, and imagined themselves house-keeping for their own legs of mutton, and ate apricots as the pony jogged slowly homewards; they ran the usual errands with more than usual willingness to the neighbouring farms, and inspired sympathy in the hearts of Jeannette and Angélique of the Mill; while in their own household they were a new and unfailing interest. For although there was formally supposed to be "nothing settled," yet as they had not the slightest doubt of Mr. Yorke's giving them his consent and blessing after the most approved style, they took no especial pains to appear politely indifferent to each other. Calla was transparent as crystal; and Felix, though occasionally reserved, seldom wore a mask.

Another sunny day shines out from the bright confusion of that past. It is the morning of Felix's departure. He and Isabel and Calla are picking fruit for the day's *compote* in the orchard as merrily as though he had not been going away. They are not thinking of the coming separation of a month or so, but rejoicing in the present together. Isabel runs in with the basket when it is full, and Felix and Calla linger still, looking for blackberries, which are not ripe yet. Calla has brought a parasol out with her; but it has been used more for a hook to pull fruit down with than as a sunshade. Now she is quite sure there is a beautiful ripe blackberry on that high bough, and trying to reach it her parasol is caught up Absalom-like by its tasselled fringe, and suspended to the topmost twig.

"Here, let me reach it for you," says Felix, coming to the rescue, and pulling the parasol down from its eminence.

"No, no; I will get it myself," says Calla, flushed and laughing, tiptoeing after the unattainable blackberry.

She is so beautiful in her free grace, the sleeves falling back from her long fair arms, her head thrown back, and her whole figure alive with its characteristic, active grace, that Felix obediently looks on and lets her make the attempt for herself, and tear her muslin sleeve and scratch her hand therein.

"And the blackberry is not ripe after all! Oh, poor little fingers wounded in vain!" he says, half laughing, but holding the little hand, and pulling out a handkerchief from his breast-pocket to envelop the scratched finger in.

During this operation of the healing art, Calla peeps into his pocket with her head a little on one side, like an inquisitive bird.

"What's this you've got treasured away here?" she asks, pointing to the corner of an envelope that is in sight.

"That's Lusada's last letter. You may have it; read it; you'll be interested in it, as you know all about Lusada. It will give you an idea of the life he's leading now. Only don't lose the address, for I want to answer it. I shall have a bit of news for him this time, shan't I?"

She smiles coyly as she abstracts the letter daintily from his pocket and unfolds it.

"Has *he* any similar news? Let me see what he has to say," she observes, glancing down the pages with running comments and questions, not all of them of a kind complimentary to Mr. Julius Lusada.

"Has he been killing anybody lately? or breaking open any more prisons? Felix, he seems to be conducting himself with disappointing propriety. He 'has made up his mind to abandon the pursuit of Fame, and follow the equally fickle goddess of Fortune.' A very wise choice.

Good gracious! what is he up to now? 'Shipping indigo!'—what an unromantic thing for a hero!"

"A capital paying thing," observes Felix.

"Here," continues Calla, dipping into another page, "is a pleasing description of a camp with an unpronounceable name. 'Reptiles'—'robberies'—'renegades'—the three new *R.'s*! One ought to have a dictionary to translate him—what's a '*greaser?*' and what's a '*vaquero*?' And here he observes, 'My troop were the wildest barbarians that ever slew or stole; but one can work with rough materials!' Really, I should think that the rougher the materials the better *he* liked it! Why, I declare he actually quotes Byron! and *here*, it appears that he is—do I read aright?—'well-nigh weary of these eternal wanderings, and hopes that yet before he dies, if only for a season, he may 'touch

the Happy Isles,' and forget the world and ambition in Peace and in such love as he used to dream of once!' I should not have fancied he was at all given to love-dreams! and how oddly his little dip into sentiment comes in after his 'camp of barbarians!' I should recommend him to 'take some savage woman'—as the young man in *Locksley Hall* thought of doing. I should think a copper-coloured squaw would suit him very well."

"Rather he than I!" exclaims Felix, with a burst of laughter. "Poor Julius! Calla, you don't seem to bear in mind the proverb, 'Love me, love my—friend!'"

"Oh, I'll love him—when he comes—quite as much as you will wish me to!" she answers gaily. "When *is* he coming, by-the-by?"

"You see he talks of coming over in a few months. But a few months to a fellow like Lusada, who is here, there, and

everywhere, may dwindle into a few weeks, or spread out into more than a few years. But he's safe to come some day—and I shall show him my lily—my white lily, that I shall have planted in my own garden then," continues Felix, whom love has inspired with the usual lover's tendency to metaphor, and especially to discover likenesses between the beloved and various of the most beautiful botanical specimens, of which a lily was his favourite, though he occasionally rang the changes between that and the rose. Nobody could have called Calla a violet or a primrose, so he never drew his similes from the wild beauties of the woods and lanes.

"If your lily is as bronzed as she is now, he won't think much of the appropriateness of the appellation," observes Calla gaily.

"Such a first-rate fellow he is," remarks Felix in a meditative way. "Some day we'll travel together, he and I and you.

Where shall we go? no, the question is where *shan't* we go?"

"Oh! Felix, I wish you weren't going to-day," she says, reminded of the fact by the allusion to travelling.

"I'll be back in a month, dear—or more, or less," he says, like Lord Lovel, of ancient song, and twists a spray of golden buttercups among the dark waves of her hair, and smiles approvingly at the effect. Inspired by his artistic success to further efforts, he twists a hasty sort of wreath from a few buttercups, a tiny spray of small red berries (that would have been black and ripe some day), and a big ox-eye daisy. This elegant and novel ornament he proceeds to dispose of on Calla's hair, and remarks, appreciatively, "There, it looks fine!"

She smiles, evidently very much consoled and comforted.

"The blackberries will be ripe when you come back," she observes. "Won't

we have happy mornings blackberrying?"

"Mademoiselle, le déjeuner est servi!" calls a shrill, voluble voice, and Claudine's white linen head-dress appears over the orchard gate.

"We must go in, I suppose," says Calla, with a reluctant little sigh. And hand in hand, like two children, they saunter slowly and with lagging steps towards the house.

*Déjeuner*—the mid-day meal—is ready, and Marie-Rose has taken especial pains with it, because it is "Monsieur Felix's" last day. And after luncheon Mr. Darrell produces a flask of rare Curaçoa, of which the three elders partake during dessert. The girls decline it; but one of them does not miss much by her refusal, as Felix sits next Calla, and silently pushes his glass towards her, and she does not refuse *him*, and so they share it as a loving-cup, sip by sip, together, as if they were back in their school-days. There is sometimes a sort of simplicity and child-like transparency

about the affection of these two that would highly amuse the members of their "set" in London. Netta Tregarne would watch them with gentle and sympathetic surprise, as if contemplating some attractive zoological curiosity. Miss Jacky Hunter would comment caustically on such open betrayal of being mutually "spoons." But they are in Arcadia here; they are out of the great world; and to them it is as if they were the only two creatures breathing the breath of real life, the life-in-life, of all La Basse-Rive.

Soon it is time for Felix to go; the pony-chaise is ready, and the other members of the family flock first to the door to arrange the small amount of bachelor's baggage he takes with him, and to pat and give sugar to the pony, leaving Felix and Calla for a few moments alone.

"Well, it's good-bye now, my Calla-lily. You never saw the lands where the calla-lilies grow like common garden-lilies

here. You don't know what they are. But they are like you, so pure and marble-fair and tall. I always thought you like them. You look well with those flowers in your hair. A pretty picture for me to take away with me. Good-bye."

"For a whole long month!" she says, regretfully.

"It seems a year. But it will be only thirty days, just like any other month, after all. Soon, so soon, I will be back with you. Think of me, write to me, take care of yourself for me, and be happy, my Calla."

"I will be happy—I am too happy in being yours even to grieve at parting from you now," she says; and smiling with the tender faith of a love that knows no fear, she looks into his eyes and lifts her face to meet his kiss.

So he goes away, happy, too—happy in the memory of Calla's loyal eyes and loving smile as they exchanged those part-

ing words of hope,—with the picture of Calla's bright beauty, crowned Bacchanal-like with leaves and berries nestling in her rich dark hair, smiling in the Summer sunshine, and glad, not sad, in their good-bye, vivid in his mind's eye all the way.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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